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INTRODUCTORY.

WHENEVER any thing in the least degree promising novelty, or tending to innovation, is aimed at in the world, particularly within the well-warded territories of literature; it is reasonably expected that some plea shall be offered for thus impertinently swerving from the good old beaten tract of imitation.

In accounting, then, for our present conduct in putting forth a publication of the lighter sort, which is meant to differ as well from the numerous race of pretty picture-books of winter, with their lady-like poetry, and their refined romance, as from the general performances of our novelists,—wherein, by great art and painstaking, and often sorely against the will both of reader and hero, they contrive to draw out the lengthened sweetness of those valuable productions, to the exact measure of bibliopolical prescription—never were men more fortunate than we, for we have to bring forward in our favour no less a personage than the great goddess of Fashion herself, who, in these innovating times, hath decidedly pointed her autocratic finger in the very direction which we have obediently taken.

This omnipotent regulator of the great concerns of literature and millinery, then, this mistress of the ceremonies even to politics and religion, having first set up a series of magnificent palaces at the western end of our metropolis, under the name of club houses, and caused to associate together into them numerous bodies of worthy men who have little to do; next in the course of the clubbing fever which naturally

followed, threw her handkerchief in the most inviting manner to all persons ambitious of being considered literary, and said to them in a voice of potency, if not of thunder, "Go ye and do likewise." How far the mandate of our great ruler has been obeyed *in the letter*, by the setting up of an additional club with a literary title, it does not perhaps become us strictly to inquire. A higher power even than Fashion herself—namely, that irresistible system of improvement which seems now abroad in the world, hath revealed to us and to all men (who, blessed with that recondite degree of penetration elegantly termed the possession of *half an eye*, are disposed to look into the tendencies of things), that it is now time it should be obeyed *in the spirit*, for reasons applying both to literary men and to the world, which are too grave as well as numerous to be here entered upon. Be that, however, as it may, this peculiar tendency of our time—this increasing spirit of segregation and of union, both at home and abroad, of which it were well that our men of talent engaged in literature more generally partook, hath furnished the collector and part writer of the following pieces with that necessary desideratum, a tolerably suitable title, under which the whole may be appropriately presented to the public.

Upon the subject of the clubs and all that pertains to them, however, we would willingly, were it at all expedient, take the present opportunity of saying a few words. Not that we ourselves have any such inconvenient discernment, as to see evil in a thing that is decidedly in fashion, so long as the fashion is fairly supported by the goddess. But considering ourselves bound on all occasions to take the part of the ladies, it hath been put into our heads to offer on their parts on this occasion a few words of gentle expostulation, with the honourable members of these great establishments.

It is well known, that since the clubs have come in, marriage has entirely gone out. The reason is obvious. How can young men of moderate fortunes be expected to confine themselves to an ordinary establishment and plain English fare, when for a tithe of the expense they can live in a palace and enjoy every sort of luxury? How can it be expected that a gentleman should marry for the old-fashioned motives of comfort and society, when the clubs and their appendages supply all this at a tenth of the cost? What is the consequence? Marriage is completely at a stand! White favours, special licenses, and honeymoons are almost forgotten. The spinsters increase on every side, and even the few married men now alive and getting old, have entirely deserted their own homes, to live, habit, and repute at their club house! What is the world to do? Are the ladies to betake themselves to nunneries, according to the project of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who, like other advice givers, was, as we all know, particularly inclined to that nunnish life which she once strongly recommended to others? Something must be done. In these reforming times, the ladies must have a reform of their own. Already they cry out for it loudly whenever they meet. Nay, they are beginning among themselves to talk absolute radicalism in regard to the clubs, and be they rotten-boroughs or be they close-boroughs, the men, say they, "must not be suffered to burrow so constantly about those luxurious establishments, or if they do there is no hope for us." We have heard of several projects being in actual discussion to bring marriage again into fashion, which it would neither be wise nor delicate in us here to broach. Now all this may be laughed at by some, and sport to the Malthusians,—but it is death to the ladies!

Grievous as this matter must doubtless be to many of that interesting sex for whom we would stand up against any, the most decided improvement in which

they are not included, we have the satisfaction to think that no such objection can be urged against our simple arrangement. Clubbing of wits,—or different individuals telling a series of tales in one book,—is too intellectual an exercise to have any serious effect in putting a stop to matrimony. At least, we should hope so; for so it happens that we are all married men, and it is generally found in the world that those who are in any trouble themselves are quite pleased to see as many as possible inveigled into similar circumstances.

But not to predicate any thing upon this matter, we cannot avoid adding a grave word upon the subject of a favourite project of ours: namely, the association together as much as possible of men of talent and character, who are professionally engaged in literary pursuits. We know it is in the nature of man, that those divided into their respective coteries of sociality, or throughout the connexions of bibliopolical competition, should be ready to say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," &c., and so bend their minds to all the littlenesses of detraction and opposition. Yet among other orders of men, whose labours have less to do with the world at large, we have heard of such a thing as an *esprit du corps*, which accomplished much good and obviated much evil; and we imagine we see something in the near distance,—even in England, where men of letters are comparatively neglected,—which promises that not long hence they will be disposed voluntarily to say, like the two kings of Israel, "Come and let us look one another in the face."

Whether, however, he has any prophetic discernment or not, the Editor of the following tales, &c. has dreamed, in his moments of sanguine speculation, of the many advantages both public and personal which might arise from the friendly association of those who have much to do with that great modern power, public opinion. But this is not the place to speak further

upon so grave a subject ; and doubtless he who indulges himself with the penning of these sentiments, and who has made that beginning in literary association which may be implied in this friendly collection, is not worthy to keep a door to a club of real *savantes*, yet in all matters of private pursuit or public spirit, it is wonderful what a love for any thing, and an occasional gleam of sanguine enthusiasm will, by perseverance, effect.

But we feel we are taking a liberty with the public for which our respected constituents have given us no express authority ; so, to end our introduction, we would only further in their name say to the good-natured reader, though the following stories are comparatively but trifles, yet considering the difficulty in the present hackneyed state of this sort of literature, of writing short tales which may obtain the attention of those who have not leisure or taste for two-volume undertaking, you will please to believe that we have done our best as a first offer for your amusement, both as to interest and variety. To conclude, then, this friendly parley with the reader, we would further say to her or him, in the manner of the older authors,—“ Gentle men and gentler maidens—dames ever fair and ever fascinating, who read tales of love, because for it ye were formed, and smile or sigh as your feelings are affected, because form and feeling are your most engaging attributes—also critics stern, penetrating and severe, with spectacle on nose and snuff at elbow,—sit down all when you are in an amiable humour, and when reading is no toil, but a mental relaxation, and be pleased if you can with our CLUB-BOOK.”



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THE CLUB-BOOK.

BERTRAND DE LA CROIX;

OR,

THE SIEGE OF RHODES.

By G. P. R. JAMES.*

CHAPTER I.

I'll follow this good man; and go with you,
And having sworn truth, ever will be true.

SHAKESPEARE.

It was on the evening of one of those uncertain days of spring which winter and summer seem to fix upon as a common battle-field, now frowning with clouds of sleet and hail, and now smiling with as bright a glance as if the blue eye of heaven had never known a tear: it was on the evening of such a day, in the beginning of the year 1522, that, in the public room of entertainment of a small inn at Beaucaire, with his feet placed upon the large iron dogs which supported a wood fire—one foot upon one and the other upon the other—sat a young traveller, turning over the red fagots on the hearth with the steel tip of his sword-scabbard.

His form was light, though muscular, and he had more the appearance of great agility than of great strength. Yet he was cast so heedlessly on his seat, and his limbs seemed to fall with such a nerveless heaviness that the promise of activity afforded by his figure was belied by the listlessness of his air, and he might have passed for one of the habitual *hostelrie*

* Author of "Richelieu," "Darnley," "De L'Orme," "Philip Augustus," &c.

hangers of the period, had not a certain meditative sadness in his countenance spoken a mind overcome by bitter thoughts, rather than a body consumed by customary sloth. His habit was good but not new, and a scanty portion of fur and gold about his mantle seemed to say that the wearer's inclination for splendid apparel was more confined by the narrowness of his purse than by any circumstance of birth or any simplicity of taste.

There was no one in the chamber but himself, and totally given up to deep and seemingly sad meditations, he continued stirring the embers with the point of his sword-scabbard, apparently unconscious both of the occupation in which he was engaged and the instrument which he employed in it. A tankard of strong Rhone wine stood untouched upon the table; and while the wind whistled through the ill-stopped cracks of the poor tenement in which he sat, almost extinguishing the lights in the sconce, and the rain of a sharp night-shower dashed angrily against the casement, he unconsciously sung a verse or two of an old Spanish ballad, which had probably as much resemblance to the real matter of his thoughts as the *Tourbillons* of Descartes had to the system of the universe.

"Mas de las penas que siento
Esta es la mas principal,
Porque perderme yo sola,
Al perder llaman ganar.
Y en perderos vos, Senora,
Es perder sin mas cobrar;
Mas pues assi lo querais
No lo queramos dilatar."

So he sung: and, indeed, it is an extraordinary fact, that under the pressure of many a heavy grief, the heart will very often find a voice in music for sorrows that are silent to language. In such cases the words to which the melody are joined are nothing. It is the music that is eloquent; and never did a more melancholy tone breathe forth the feelings of a sad and troubled spirit. His thoughts, his sensations, his very external senses seemed so powerfully concentrated on

some deep and absorbing theme, that the ordinary occurrences that passed around him were veiled from his eyes and ears.

A troop of horses stopped at the inn-gate ; and the clattering hoofs and jangling of their caparisons might have awakened the seven sleepers ; but his dream remained unbroken, and he marked not one of all the many sounds which trumpet the arrival of a large company at a poor inn.

A fine manly voice was then heard giving manifold directions to some mute attendants. "Cross the ferry with all speed ! and then on to Arles.—The horses are quite fresh.—'Tis but three leagues.—Tell the noble prior that I remain behind on business at Beaucaire, but that I come onward to-morrow ; and you, Brother Francis, see that the arms be all arrived, and examine well that they be in good condition. Think of all things for the good of the order.—Watch and pray !"

With such injunctions, half-clerical, half-military, the speaker concluded ; the clattering of the hoofs again echoed along the street, mingling as it receded with the howling of the wind, the pattering of the rain, and the roaring of the angry Rhone ; and, after a little more bustle at the door, the worthy host with various nondescript attendants ushered in the stranger, who had remained behind, and whose step, as he strode up to the hearth, was the first thing which roused the original tenant of the room from his dream of other times.

The young man started, and for a moment looked bewildered, as one whose thoughts had been far, far away ; then rose from his stool, and fixing his eyes for an instant intently on the face of his new companion, he withdrew from the monopolizing position in which he had placed himself before the fire, and with a graceful inclination of the head made room for the other to share in the warm smile of cold, stern winter's most cheerful opponent.

The stranger shook his robe, which was drenched with the night-rain, and took his seat by the fire, gazing for a brief space on his young companion, with one of

those glances of quick examination which we are wont to bestow on him that is to be our fellow for an hour—rapid, but keen—superficial, but comprehensive. His own occupation was at once denoted by the dark robe and eight-limbed cross worn by the knights of St. John of Rhodes; and his tall martial form, his broad splendid brow, round the high contour of which the gray locks of eld curled unthinned and luxuriant, his eye full of fire and intellect, his proud lip, on whose patrician bend hung a world of energy and command; all bespoke one of the best knights of that gallant order, the stumblingblock of the Saracen power, and the bulwark of Christendom.

All this was easily read, and one hasty glance was sufficient to satisfy the younger traveller; but he himself presented a page which his companion found harder to decipher. His dress was of that middle rank which in those days was less common in every country of the world than it is now. Each class was then more distinct: the peasant trod less upon the kibe of the peer, and every species and genus in that branch of zoology called society was in general to be known immediately by some external mark, as distinctive as the beaks of the accipitrine or the legs of the gruine tribe. The young stranger, however, in simplicity of apparel, touched somewhat upon the class of burghers, while a casual ornament of a higher grade spoke pretensions to a more elevated birth.

The first glance the knight of Rhodes had given did not satisfy him, and he again ran his eye over the stranger's dress: then, still undetermined, he turned it to his face, and read, or thought he read, the traces of tender education and gentle breeding in the fine, clear, defined lines of his features, and the flash of his dark, melancholy eye; while the extreme whiteness of the upper part of his forehead, which was commonly shaded by his hat, contrasted strongly with the ruddy, sun-burned hue of the rest of his countenance.

What had been apparently a severe wound was still covered with a long black patch upon his cheek; and

as the younger traveller suddenly roused himself from one of his deep fits of thought, and surprised the eyes of his companion fixed upon his face, the knight of St. John took that wound as the pass-word to conversation, saying,—

“You have been in the late wars, young sir, I see.”

“I have, Sir Knight,” was the reply; and the younger stranger again sank into silence.

“Was it in the wars of Navarre, of Flanders, or of Burgundy?” demanded the other; “I have a motive for my curiosity, young gentleman, better than curiosity alone.”

“And I have no motive for concealment,” replied the young soldier; “I served in Navarre,” and he was again silent.

There was a degree of cold and somewhat haughty reserve in his manner, that seemed to offend the knight of St. John, who doubtless looked upon the advances of an old and distinguished member of so renowned an order as an honour to which any stripling soldier might reply with somewhat more free respect. A cloud came over his brow, and his eye sparkled for an instant, but such signs of heat passed by immediately.

“After all,” muttered he to himself, “we are but poor friars, or at least poor soldiers of Christ; we should be humbler than we are. In Navarre,” he added aloud, “I have a brave nephew, my dead brother’s only son, who is fighting under the noble Andrew de Foix to restore to Henry d’Albert his natural dominions of Navarre; I would fain hear news of him, young sir. In your campaigns have you met with the young Duke of Nivelle?”

“There was such a person in the army,” replied the soldier, “and I remember we won our knightly spurs together at the taking of Pampeluna; but the difference of our fortunes threw us far apart. I saw him once, however, in the prison at Logroño.”

“In prison!” exclaimed the knight; “in prison!”

“Ay, in prison!” replied the young soldier. “Have you not heard of our defeat, and the taking of the young

Count de Foix and all his officers?—'tis an old tale with us. Some three weeks gone we fought the Spanish army and were beaten,—'tis an old tale now."

"But I have been travelling quick, though long, my son," replied the knight, "and have thought of nothing but how best to fulfil my duty towards the grand master and my order, by sending arms and provisions to Rhodes against the menaced invasion of the Turks. Speak, sir: was my nephew still in prison?—how did you yourself escape?—does he require ransom?—where is he confined?"

The youth gazed on his elder companion for a moment with a glance in which the eager anxiety of the knight's questions seemed to have awakened a corresponding energy; but instantly the light faded away, and the same cold shadow fell over his face.

"In truth I cannot tell," he replied gravely, "whether the Duke de Nivelles be still in prison or not. He sent to Toulouse for money to pay his ransom, and doubtless it has reached him by this time. I myself escaped by accident, and go to try my sword under the new Grand Master of Rhodes against the Turks."

The knight of St. John paused thoughtfully for a moment, as if there was something in the youth's reply that had struck him deeply. "The new Grand Master of Rhodes!" he said at length thoughtfully. "It is strange that I, a prior of the order, should first hear that there is a new Grand Master of Rhodes from the lips of a stranger; but De Merail loves me not. When he offered me his daughter for my nephew in marriage I refused an alliance with a man of his great pride, and now he loves me not, and doubtless has never notified to me his election that I may be the last informed of the order. So Fabricius Carette, that valiant prince, is dead, and De Merail has of course been elected in his place?"

While his companion thus spoke, half-communing with himself, half-carrying on the conversation in which they had been engaged, the young soldier had apparently relapsed into thought, and with his eyes fixed

again-upon the embers, seemed far away in some silent world of his own. Nothing showed that he heard the good knight's words, till at length, without a change of feature, he replied abstractedly, "Carette, indeed, is dead! De Merail has lost the election of which he was so sure, and Villiers de l'Isle Adam is Grand Master of Rhodes."

The knight of St. John started on his feet. "I!—I!" cried he. "Impossible! utterly impossible! How should De Merail lose his election, with wealth, and rank, and influence,—and be it said too, with valour, and wisdom, and talent? And how should I be chosen—absent, and probably almost forgotten? But tell me, sir, who are you who know so much more of my order than myself?"

"A poor gentleman of Tourain," replied the youth, "Bertrand de la Croix by name, and it is easy to tell how I learned all the news I give you. 'Tis but two days since that landing at Marseilles from Spain I met with a whole train of knights and serving brothers of the order of St. John, who had been at Paris, seeking in vain for *you*—if you, indeed, as your words imply, be the newly-elected Grand Master of Rhodes. I came on hither, having some business at Toulouse, and intending instantly to make my way back, and, with the first bark sailing to take a passage for Rhodes, with the purpose of there offering my sword to the grand master on the threatened invasion of the Turks. That sword I now offer with all my heart—accept it, sir, for it is the first drawn in your service."

The grand master stood for a moment mute, with his eye fixed upon vacancy, while a crowd of new sensations filled his bosom: hopes, doubts, anxieties, pride chastened by moderation, ambition elevated and purified by religion and disinterestedness. A crowd of new ideas, too, whirled through his brain—cares, dangers, difficulties, much to be met, and much to be overcome, much to be prevented, and much to be crushed. The sudden announcement of his new station changed like the touch of death his state of exist-

ence; his relation to every thing around was altered, he was in a new world, where all was new, vague, uncertain, indistinct, unfamiliarized with his mind and heart; yet still it is not to be denied that the whole was pleasing. However much we may guard against the seductions of our vanity, that Dalilah of the human mind, her blandishments will still be sweet, even though they win us not to evil. He could not hide from himself that the tidings were gratifying to him, and he that had first communicated them found the avenues of his heart opened by the news that he had given.

The grand master laid his hand kindly upon his young companion's shoulder: "Your sword, young sir," he said, "is willingly accepted by the order of St. John, for, by my faith, we shall need the assistance of all our friends, if the news which I have gathered in Hungary be correct regarding the preparations of the Turk. But should what you tell me of my election be true—and I will not doubt it—I must instantly forward to Marseilles to meet the deputies of the council; although, God help us, I must therefore abandon the design I had formed of going on into Navarre to see my poor nephew, whom I have not met for these fifteen long years. Would that I could find any one worthy of confidence who would bear a letter for me to my poor Nivelle, if he be still in prison, or would absolutely ascertain that he is free."

The grand master fixed his eyes upon his young companion, who at once understood his meaning, and accepted the commission. Nor let it be thought extraordinary that Bertrand de la Croix thus readily undertook a fatiguing journey, and a difficult, perhaps a dangerous enterprise, for a person he had seen but for one short hour. In those days the reverence for age itself was great, and for high military renown still greater. The name of Villiers de l'Isle Adam was gloriously known throughout all Europe, and even without having, like Bertrand, taken service under him, which rendered his request almost a command, there was probably scarcely a young soldier in all France who would have

hesitated to do his will, had it sent him to the uttermost parts of the earth.

A few brief explanations ensued. The grand master informed his young companion that with all his impatience to depart for Rhodes, he would be still obliged to wait at Marseilles for several weeks, embarking the military stores and reinforcements, which during many months he had been employed in collecting for the defence of the order; and it was agreed that the young soldier should with all speed rejoin him there, bringing with him, if possible, the old knight's nephew, the Duke of Nivelle. The letter was then written, some business concluded between the grand master and the merchants of Beaucaire, and the two travellers separated, to proceed the next day each upon his own path.

CHAPTER II.

When I view the beauties of thy face,
I fear not death, nor dangers, nor disgrace.

DRYDEN.

THE sun had risen and set, and risen again, since we last left Bertrand de la Croix, and now he was in Spain. Not, indeed, in either Navarre or Castile, but in the rich and beautiful land of Catalonia, upon that lovely shore that casts its splendid smile over the bright waters of the Mediterranean Sea. A high old tower, perched upon a wild, bold rock, from the scanty earth of which a thousand shrubs and trees sprang up and waved their green branches in the sunshine of a Spanish spring, looked over on the one hand a wide tract of hill and dale, and wood and pasture, and river and cascade, and on the other hung beetling above the waves.

France and Spain were at enmity, and invading armies lay upon the frontier of each; but there wandered

the young French soldier, through that fair scene, enjoying all its beauties; nor did he seem to fear aught of evil or interruption. The cloud had passed from his brow also, and indeed a magic more potent than northern spells seemed to have been used to dispel it, for as he wound down from the castle along the meandering and sunny path, as fair a creature as ever Nature in her sweetest and most witching mood created hung upon his arm, with that fond confidence which only love, full, deep, undoubting love can give. Far out of earshot, toying with one of those gay and silky dogs whose true though fawning attachment and whose obedient love have become almost a by-word in the mouth of perverse man, came an old sedate dame, clothed in hood and wimple of deep black, with prim, subservient features, touched with a grim look of habitual acid, which at once denoted the duenna. Down in the valley too, two pages, of the true page breed, pert, happy, thoughtless, and as fine as new-blown buttercups, held the proud horse which had borne the young soldier thither, and which, glancing his clear eye around, with raised ear and pawing hoof, seemed anxious for his lord's return, to dart away and revel in his fleetness and his strength.

But Bertrand de la Croix was in no haste to quit such fair company; and as he strayed onward, and ever and anon gazed fondly on the lovely being by his side, a thousand varied expressions of happiness lit up his features, changing from the gay and laughing glance of sparkling joy to the calm, placid smile of bland content. Nor were the dark full eyes that looked upon him sad, though there was a tenderer tone in their delight, and at times a shade, as if of melancholy, would dim the light that darted through their long and silken lashes.

At length, as the path wound round the hill, there suddenly broke upon the eye, through the fluttering canopy of the leaves and boughs, a bright far view over the sunshiny sea; and Bertrand paused, and stretching forth his hand towards it, he exclaimed—

"Over the sea, Isabel! over the sea! Quick, quick, if you love me! rapidly as Juno's messenger, or as the winged will of Jove! You are not frightened, dearest, at those dark blue waves? Look how they dance and smile in the golden sunlight, as if to woo your small feet to the bark that shall bear you, like the floating feather of some snowy bird, to the spicy island of the east! Oh, no! no! so fair a thing as thou art should never fear; 'tis not in the cold cruelty of the most treacherous sea to hurt thee, far less so bright a plain of calm blue waters as that. No, no! it shall be I who will fear, and listen for every wind, lest it rock my Isabel too roughly, and chide every wave, lest it disturb her slumbers! It is I will fear!"

The lady shook her head. "You fear!" she answered: "you know not what fear is, Bertrand. I do fear—yet still, if that sea which, with all its multitude of false-smiling waves, looks even now like eternity, were trebled in extent, I would cross them all to make you happy. But still, though it is very, very delightful to hope, do not let us deceive ourselves too far. When I tell you that my father has summoned me to Rhodes, you seem to think that every thing is over, and yet forget that he has said fire and water shall sooner unite than we with his consent."

"Rash words, dear Isabel! rash words!" replied her lover; "soon said and soon recanted. Fear not! fear not! I have a thousand ways to win him; and such good havoc shall my sword make among the Turks, that for very shame he shall not dare refuse me. Then, too, I shall see you every day, and your dear eyes shall be the fortunate planets of my house, and light me on to glory and to victory."

With such lover-like rhapsodies they wandered on, full of sweet thoughts; and though Isabel would hardly own how much she herself hoped, and how mingled with glad expectations were her fears of crossing the wide sea, yet still her lover's ardent words fell not on her ear without effect; and when the sad, inevitable moment of parting at length came, she too spoke the

mutual words of comfort and assurance, and owned that she felt happier, far happier than when last they parted, when he was about to speed alone over the dark waves to win a difficult consent from her stern, proud parent, and she had to remain behind in lonely expectation, waiting, comfortless, the uncertain event.

Bertrand gazed round to see if there was any one in sight, pressed her to his bosom, and printed his last adieu upon the dear soft lips whose words had given him so much happiness. Then bounding up the hill, he turned the corner of the rock, which had hidden them from the complacent duenna, laid a small but satisfactory purse in the palm of that worthy and discreet friend, and bidding her guard well her mistress in the approaching voyage, he turned away, and hastened to the valley where his horse was held.

"Have you delivered safely the sacks of money with the ransom?" demanded he of the elder page. The boy signified that he had fulfilled his orders, and placed a safe-conduct, as a passport was then called, in the hands of his master. "Well, then," continued Bertrand, "speed back to your fellows, and bring them with all haste to meet me at Marseilles. You, sirrah, hold the stirrup. But stay," he continued, "I had forgot the letter!" and drawing a step back, he produced the identical epistle written by the Grand Master of Rhodes to his nephew, and after pausing for an instant to consider, he cut the silk between the seals, muttering with a smile—"The contents may be fully as useful to Bertrand de la Croix as to the good Duke of Nivelle; so I see not why I should not read."

Thus saying, he perused the contents from beginning to end, thought for an instant in silence, and then, with a gay smile, tore the letter in a thousand pieces, and gave the fluttering fragments to the wind. A moment after he was upon his horse's back; and, with as upright a carriage as if he had violated no confidence reposed in him, the deceitful messenger of the grand master turned on his road to France. Gradually, however, as he spurred on his way, the bright memory of the happy

hours he had passed with Isabel de Meraïl waned into regret ; the splendid day-dream of young love, with all its many-coloured hues of delight, faded away like a dying rainbow, as the star which had lent it its brilliant tints was hidden by the cold cloud of absence. The gay sparkling of his look lasted but for half an hour ; and, before night had fallen, he was nearly as cold and sad as when first we painted him in the inn at Beaucaille.

On his arrival at Marseilles, he found the grand master in all the bustle of active preparations. Knights and soldiers and serving brothers surrounded him ; and in the palace of the bishop, who lodged and entertained the chief of the Christian knights with courtesy and magnificence, all was hurry, and crowd, and inquiry, and command. Bertrand de la Croix opened a path through a multitude of merchants and seamen, who waited the grand master's commands concerning military stores for Rhodes, and finding his way to that prince's presence, he gave an account of his journey, somewhat different, alas ! from the true one. He had not been able to penetrate, he said, as far as Logroño ; but he had met a messenger speeding back to the Duke of Nivelle with his ransom, and to him he had confided the letter of the knight. He softened the mortification however, which he saw the grand master experienced at not receiving more satisfactory news of his nephew, by informing him that he had found means of enlisting fifty veteran volunteers, who were willing to serve the order of St. John, under his command, during the menaced attack of the Turks, however long that attack might be.

Villiers de l'Isle Adam gazed on his young companion for a moment with a look of some surprise ; at length he answered, "If fifty veteran soldiers are willing to serve under so young a man, I have every reason to rely upon their judgment, and to look highly upon their commander ; but we will inspect these troops, Sir Bertrand de la Croix."

The young soldier made no reply, but after the

interval of a few days, his volunteers arrived, and were passed in review before the grand master, when their dark and war-worn countenances, their skill in the use of arms, and their correct and easy discipline, at once showed them choice companions for dangerous moments and bold attempts. Bertrand de la Croix rose in the opinion of the grand master; but though the knight of Rhodes felt his curiosity awakened, he would not descend to question the soldiers the young stranger had brought, and did not choose to make any inquiry of a man so reserved and uncommunicative as he had shown himself.

The troops and the stores were embarked with all possible speed, and at length Bertrand, at the desire of the grand master himself, entered the vessel which bore that prince to Rhodes, and accompanied him from the port of Marseilles on his voyage to the island of the order.

The sun shone upon their departure, and the various galleys and feluccas which convoyed the bark of the grand master, bounding lightly over the blue waves, before a mild and favourable wind, rendered it a gay and splendid scene, as the armament sailed away from the sweet shores of France; but evil auguries of all kinds soon overclouded their passage. Before the ship was a day old at sea, a cry of fire was heard; in an instant the flames were seen running with frightful rapidity from spar to spar, from rope to rope, and from sail to sail. Whirlwinds of smoke and fire invested the whole ship, and drifted over the sea, and terror, confusion, and despair seemed to take possession of men who on other occasions had calmly met death and danger in a thousand varied forms. Some were mute and stupified, some cried wildly for help, where no help was near, and some sprang into the sea to avoid the more terrible fate around them. In that moment of peril there were but two who preserved that cool and ready firmness which combines all the best qualities of mental and corporeal courage—Bertrand de la Croix and the Grand Master of Rhodes; but their united efforts

recalled the rest to hope and exertion. The fire was gradually arrested, diminished, extinguished, and the vessel though injured was preserved.

After a delay in order to refit, the ship pursued her way, but the high lands of Corsica were hardly out of sight, when the heavens, which had hitherto been as clear and smiling as a father's gaze upon the sleeping countenance of his first-born child, grew dark and stormy as an evil dream. The winds howled with a hot sharp gust, the rain fell, and the lightning blazed along the sky. Flash after flash rent the angry atmosphere, and at length the sharp white stream of liquid fire struck the vessel, pierced the deck, and blazed in the cabin of the grand master. For a moment the bright meteoric glare dazzled all eyes. None saw what passed around, and the intensity of the light rendered it akin to darkness; but when sight returned, Bertrand and Villiers de l'Isle Adam found four of their companions stretched lifeless on the floor. The storm passed away, and the bodies of the dead had sepulture in the bosom of that dark charnel the sea; but it was afterward found that the sword of the grand master had been broken by the lightning in its sheath, which itself bore no sign of fire,* and all augured evil to his government when it began with such prodigies and misfortunes.

Villiers smiled at evil auguries, and though at Syracuse he heard of pirates who waited him on his passage to Rhodes, he boldly pursued his voyage, passed every danger, and rounding Candia entered the golden expanse of the Carpathian Sea. A thousand bright islands gemmed the waters, and as the ship sailed on they were seen one after the other in the blue distance, invested with an airy and fantastic splendour, as if they were not really of the earth, but some of the grand phantasms of a splendid vision.

The heart of Bertrand de la Croix beat high, as he stood upon the deck and saw them one by one rise

* See Vertot *Histoire de l'Ordre de Malte*, vol. ii, p. 426.

upon the view, pass by, and recede into the gray obscurity of space. The many memories which those climates recall—the spectres of a long-gone age of mighty glory—the voices of a thousand wonderful years saluted the young soldier as he sailed along, and for a time shared his bosom with the feelings, the wishes, the hopes, the regrets of the present.

At length Rhodes itself rose from the waves before him, and passing on towards its many-memored port, he beheld the armed city of the Christian knights, stretching down towards the sea with its glorious gardens of the olive, the pomegranate, the fig, and the vine spreading over the uplands towards the clear unclouded sky.

CHAPTER III.

Duke. Now!—What's the business?

Sailor. The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes, so was I bid report here to the state.

Othello.

WHEN Villiers de l'Isle Adam and his young companion first trod the shores of Rhodes, not a sign of approaching strife was to be seen. The island with all its dependencies slept in peace, and the sails of the galleys of the order flapped idly in the listless wind of the port.

But very soon after the installation of the grand master, the whole began to bear a new aspect. His eye, like that of the long-experienced mariner, which sees and prepares against the storm that is gathering afar, beheld at once the tempest of infidel war which was silently accumulating to break upon the order with double force, and he lost not a moment in putting the island into the most perfect state of defence. The affairs of peace were abandoned at once: stores were sought in every part of the earth; deep ditches chan-

neled the ground in all directions round the city, and mighty fortifications were raised in addition to those which had before guarded the town and ports. The hand of desolation too was stretched forth over the land, and to ensure that neither the means of subsistence nor materials for offence might be furnished to the enemy by the country they were about to attack, the fields, the vineyards, the gardens were wasted, the olive-tree, the fig, and the pomegranate were cut down. The country-houses and the churches were razed to the ground: the very stones of which they were built were swept away, and the whole country was laid as bare and desolate as if the cultivating spirit of man had never bade it blossom into beauty and plenteousness. At the same time that great and extraordinary force, military discipline, was called to give vigour and power to the defenders of Rhodes. Enthusiasm was kept alive in every bosom. The natives of the island and the citizens of Rhodes, though not belonging to the order, showed strongly by their ardour and pride in its defence, that the chivalrous character of its knights had extended its influence even to the hearts of the burgher and the peasant; adventurers and volunteers flocked in from every land, the soldiers of St. John were all courage and defiance; and the whole island looked for the coming of the Turks as a means of living honour or glorious martyrdom. Each officer, each soldier, each knight had his particular post assigned him, and seldom has the Christian world presented such a splendid display of gallant chivalry as thronged in arms upon the battlements of Rhodes.

In these arrangements Bertrand de la Croix was not forgotten; his cool but daring courage in all moments of danger had forced itself continually upon the observation of the grand master during the voyage from France: and there was also in his manner, however taciturn and grave, something which won regard—an undefinable charm, which, like the secret influence of some magic power, pleased and captivated without being seen or known. Villiers looked upon the young

stranger with kindness, and relaxed the state of office and the sternness of command to win to confidence and intimacy; but Bertrand repelled every advance, and yet the grand master's affection, he knew not why, increased towards him instead of diminishing; and though he left him within the intrenchments which his silent reserve raised up around him, yet he did every thing consistent with his duty and his dignity to honour and to raise him.

To the fifty veteran soldiers who had first volunteered to serve under this young leader, the grand master added a band of a hundred adventurers who had taken service with the order, and in command of these Bertrand was assigned the defence of a part of the bastion of Auvergne, as it was called; for each part of the fortifications was intrusted to one of the several nations or languages of which the order was composed.

Still days and weeks passed and no enemy made his appearance; and Bertrand was constantly seen gazing from tower and turret and high ground over the seas; and every sail that he saw he watched long and anxiously, as it sometimes glided on calmly over the distant waves, sometimes grew upon the eye till it approached the shore and reached the port. In that case Bertrand was always at the ship's side among the first, listening eagerly to every detail of her passage, and, with frowning brow marking the many tales of Mussulman pirates that hovered round the island, and strove to master each vessel as it passed round the Sicilian coast and entered the Ionian seas.

To the knights of the order the young stranger soon became generally known; but the same silent reserve continued in his manner to all those whose age and pursuits seemed naturally to assimilate them with himself. A cold and somewhat haughty inclination of the head—a passing word, neither courteous nor rude, was all that he exchanged with any one, except with Sir Andrew de Merail, the chancellor of the order. To him, however, the manners of Bertrand de la Croix were very different; and whatever were

the means he took to win the proud Castilian, they were at least successful, for De Meraïl was soon his frequent companion in his walks along the battlements, or in his rides over the high hills which commanded a view of the sea; and they would talk long and earnestly of far distant lands and scenes that seemed to be familiar to both, and some common anxiety appeared to be in the minds of each.

This was remarked and remembered afterward, and the knights of Rhodes were accustomed to observe, with a smile, how the two haughtiest men in the island had at once fallen into companionship together.

Though his countenance grew day by day more sad and anxious, the appearance of Bertrand de la Croix had in other respects assumed a gayer aspect than when first we spoke of him at Beaucaire. His apparel had gradually become splendid, his horses were the finest that could be procured. Servants and cavaliers were added to his train; and though he himself fared hardly, and lay upon a soldier's couch, yet ease and luxury pervaded his dwelling in the town of Rhodes, and many a young adventurer was glad to take service under him. Such as saw Bertrand de la Croix near, however, soon perceived that some deep and agitating care was busy at his mind. Each day, each hour it preyed upon him more and more; and even at night when sleep fell for a few troubled hours upon his eyelids, his slumber was disturbed and wretched, and the name of Isabel would break often from his unconscious lips.

In the mean while the mind of the grand master was wholly occupied with the defence of the capital. The triple enclosure of fortifications by which it was surrounded, the castle of St. Angelo, that of St. Elmo, the great tower of the Duke of Burgundy called the Tower of St. Nicolas, the thirteen old towers which flanked the second wall, had each their respective garrisons. Each of the ramparts also was defended, as I have said, by the nation whose name it bore; and a reserve was formed, divided into four bands, which

were called companies of succour, under four of the most distinguished knights of the order, of whom the chancellor De Merail was one.

At length a multitude of fires upon the Lycian mountains gave notice that some great movement was taking place among the infidels; and after waiting for a few days in anxious expectations, the dawn of morning showed to the knights of Rhodes the whole sea covered with innumerable ships, bearing the enemy to their coasts. Each man in Rhodes was prepared to do his duty—to conquer or to die: but it must not be dissembled, that when first the cry was heard—“A fleet! A fleet!”—and the fatal crescent was seen glittering upon the air, many a heart, even of the bravest, beat with new and awful feelings, and a deep silence fell upon the armed city after the first rush of many feet had carried the multitude to the walls. They gazed upon the coming foe with the still quietness of strong expectation, watched all his manœuvres, counted the continual sails, measured with keen eyes the size of every vessel; and then reasoned, each with his fellow, on the enemy’s number and their strength.

Four hundred ships, of different sizes, anchored within sight of Rhodes, and during the fifteen days which followed near two hundred thousand men were disembarked upon the island. The scattered report of artillery from some of the small forts erected to defend the coast was all that announced to the inhabitants of the town itself that the enemy was multiplying on their shores; for though the fleet continued still in sight, the bay in which the landing took place was hidden from the view by the high ground around. The reconnoitring parties, however, also brought in news from time to time, and then the advanced posts of the Christians were seen retreating towards the town, while here and there upon the heights appeared the gay and fluttering dresses of the Turkish horsemen. At length, thick and cloudy, the dust rose above the hill, and the wind brought swells of wild and martial music to the very battlements of Rhodes. Troop

after troop of infidel cavalry, mounted on horses like the wind, gathered upon the plains, and long files of infantry advanced slowly, lining the edge of the prospect, and bristling the rise with pikes. In the morning the eye might have run over the whole view without seeing one living thing move through the extent of miles; and at evening, wherever the sight could reach was thronged with busy life. Myriads of dim forms might be perceived in every direction, and a roar like the distant voice of the sea came faintly upon the ear till night fell, and all was silence.

A space of nearly three miles still lay between the city and the besieging force; and, though a gun or two had been fired upon the parties which advanced far into the plain, the first day passed without any serious effort on either side.

The next day, however, the trenches were opened, and every hour saw them advance. They were pushed within cannon-shot, a battery was erected, and its guns began to play upon the walls; but the tremendous fire which was opened from the artillery of the place soon silenced the battery and swept the plain. The whole of every day a continual cannonade was kept up from the walls, mowing down like grass before the scythe every thing that appeared; and during the night, even the dark lines of walls and angles, and towers and battlements wrapped in the deep obscurity, through which the eye could scarcely trace their heavy masses, would suddenly become illuminated by a bright line of fire that, running from gun to gun, garlanded with fitful caprice the frowning brow of the fortress, and displayed its grim features with a sudden blaze, which was as speedily extinguished. Still, however, the Moslems pushed their approaches, and still by a thousand vigorous sallies the knights of St. John impeded their advance. Death in a multitude of fearful shapes awaited each infidel that ventured into the plain, and never did chivalry achieve nobler feats than before the walls of Rhodes. In every sally, in every bold attempt Bertrand de la Croix was foremost and most keen.

Night after night he lay upon the ramparts, and day after day he went forth at the head of his followers, and returned red with the blood of the foe. The eyes of all men gradually fixed upon him, for wherever Bertrand de la Croix was seen there was the place of danger and of honour—there the thickest of the fight. The Moslems scattered from his arm like the dust of the desert before the siroc, and the Christians followed where he led, like darkness on the path of the lightning. Days and weeks wore by, and though supported by forty-fold the number of the Christians, the Turks made no impression on the walls of Rhodes; and as every evening closed in, some new tale of the young adventurer's daring was added to those which had gone before.

If praise and honour, however, were universally given to him, the companion of all his vacant hours, Sir Andrew de Merail, was looked upon with some degree of cold dislike. No one doubted the courage of the chancellor of the order, who, for eighteen years of his life which he had devoted to its cause, had shown a fearless valour, unsurpassed by any of its members; but certain it was that in the present war none of his former activity appeared. He avoided not danger, it is true, he stood calm and unmoved in the midst of the thickest fire: he seemed to forget the possibility of personal fear: but still there was no longer any of that eager energy in his demeanour which had raised him in the eyes of all to the glorious place of one of the most distinguished knights of St. John. His present indifference was easily accounted for; and the whole order had long perceived that the elevation of another to the dignity of grand master, when he had fancied his own election sure, had given his vanity a wound which nothing could heal, and that thenceforward Andrew de Merail was but a lukewarm member of their chivalrous brotherhood.

The whole talents of each individual, however, was necessary to the very salvation of the order, and the grand master tried by every demonstration of kindness and favour to win De Merail back to the display of all

his vigour and activity. He praised, he consulted, he even courted him; and on one occasion he proposed himself the alliance which he had formerly declined, of his nephew, the Duke of Nivelle, with a daughter whom De Merail, when he took the cross of St. John, had left behind him in Spain. The chancellor replied but vaguely, but at the same time there was a bitter and cynical smile upon his lip which augured not favourably for the grand master's offer. His efforts, however, in favour of the order seemed occasionally to revive, and such was the fiery and chivalrous defence which the knights opposed to the Ottoman arms, that murmurs, discontent, and despondency spread through the Turkish army, and the fate of Rhodes seemed assured by the gallantry of her noble masters. At this crisis, however, arrived the Sultan Soliman himself, at that time in the meridian of his power and glory. With him, too, was the famous corsair, Courtogli; and the spirits of the Moslem rose under the eye of their king and the conduct of their daring countryman, to a pitch of ardour and enthusiasm which required all the fortitude and resolution of the Christians to resist.

The approaches were now once more pushed forward with incessant activity; batteries were raised and sustained; two enormous cavaliers were erected, dominating the bastions of Auvergne and Italy. The tower of St. John, from which the Christians had discovered and frustrated the former measures of the Turks, was beaten down with cannon-shot; and it seemed, as if by some preternatural intelligence, the infidels obtained information of all the weak points of the fortress, and of the designs of its defenders. At the same time the progress of the Turkish works was covered by such immense bodies of troops, that the grand master was obliged to forbid the sallies of the knights and soldiers of the order on account of the immense and overwhelming multitude of their enemies. The volunteers, however, were still permitted to follow the dictates of their own courage; and hardly a day passed over but Bertrand de la Croix surprised the foe, and won new honour by some bold and politic exploit.

The praises he received, however, and the deference with which he was treated, seemed to fall upon his heart like rain upon the sand of the desert, leaving not a trace of its having been. In the moment of danger and of strife the soul would beam up and flash forth in living fire from his dark eye; his glance would become full of energy and command, and a few brief words, instinct with the *prestige* of victory and the consciousness of power, would rouse his followers to deeds of almost insane daring, and lead them forward to the very cannon's mouth. At other times he was still cold and sad; and wandering round the bastions, he would sometimes gaze long and wistfully upon the melancholy sea, and then, with a mournful sigh, turn away, or calmly placing himself in the midst of the enemy's fire, would watch their movements and plan some feat to counteract their designs.

One day, after standing long on the bastion of Italy, against which the whole cannon of the enemy were pointed, he turned and walked on, musing, to another part of the ramparts, which, unattacked, had been left nearly solitary. As he proceeded he saw an arrow, shot from one of the angles before him, fall into the Turkish lines, and a Moslem suddenly pick it up and carry it quickly away. The young soldier hastened forward towards the spot from whence it had been winged; for, notwithstanding the rapidity of its flight, he felt sure that he had seen a small white packet attached to the head as it fell; but on turning the angle of the wall he found no one but the Chancellor de Merail, and a slave holding a bow. So high an officer of the order and so brave a soldier was above suspicion; but still the matter was strange, and Bertrand de la Croix passed on musing. His curiosity was excited; yet, nevertheless, he felt bound by the laws of courtesy to inquire no further, and some ill-defined doubt made him mention what he had observed to no one. De Merail had remarked him pass, and from that moment his regard and attachment towards the young soldier seemed a thousand-fold increased, and all his own energies were henceforth signally exerted in defence of the order.

Indeed, every effort had now become necessary. The enemy had rendered themselves masters of a part of the Italian post, and the sap and the mine were going on at once with great taciturnity. The English and the Spanish boulevards also were attacked; fresh troops came over daily from the Lycian continent to the aid of the infidels, and continual, persevering, unremitted assaults wore and wasted the small host of defenders. At length more than one terrific breach appeared in the walls, and notwithstanding all the activity of Villiers de l'Isle Adam and his brave associates, the tremendous fire of the Turkish artillery prevented the reconstruction of the defences. During the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth of September this unceasing cannonade seemed to announce that some great and general assault was about to take place on the part of the Moslem; and during the morning of the thirtieth it was continued with terrible effect. Various movements also were seen in the Turkish army, and a great part of their force was drawn out in array, while a number of reconnoitring parties advanced and examined the state of the fortifications, notwithstanding an incessant shower of shot which poured from the cannon of the place.

But suddenly the fire of the Turks began to relax, their troops retired within the lines, and though the Christians remained in arms during the whole day, it became the general opinion, towards night, that the infidels had completely abandoned their design. The knights in general pressed the grand master to suffer all such troops as were not absolutely necessary to retire from the ramparts; and on his evincing some hesitation, De Merail observed, with a sneer, "that their commander wished to harden his troops like steel; and that, having heated them red-hot in the sun of a whole September day in the island of Rhodes, he was now going to cool them in the dews of a whole September night."

Still the grand master remained firm; and it was not till he had again and again examined, with careful accuracy, the distant encampment of the enemy, that he

suffered a part of his weary soldiers to retire from the shattered walls and seek a few hours' repose. He himself knew none, but instantly proceeding to the citadel, he called six of his principal knights to council, and remained in long and secret debate. Bertrand de la Croix wrapped himself in his mantle, and casting himself down upon the bastion of Auvergne, where a large mass of stone threw a broad shadow in the midst of the yellow glare of moonlight, he closed his eyes, and seemed to sleep, but his mental vision rested still upon the wide and greedy sea, and many a gloomy phantom rose up before imagination, and drove hope, and peace, and slumber far away.

CHAPTER IV.

To me the cries of fighting fields are charms,
Keen be my sabre, and of proof my arms,
I ask no other blessing of my stars.

DRYDEN.

THE sky, and the air, and the earth were all calm as infancy, and the brightness of the midnight moon, mingling with a soft white autumn haze which filled up all the hollows, wrapped the scene in a dim uncertain splendour, more difficult for the eye to penetrate than darkness itself. A slight distant murmuring rush, like the roll of slow waves over a pebbly shore, fell upon the ear of Bertrand de la Croix as he lay upon the bastion, and starting upon his feet he gazed over the space between the armed walls and the lines of the infidel. Nothing, however, could he descry, and putting his hand to his ear, he listened; but for a moment the eager pulsations of his own quick heart was all he heard; and he doubted.—An instant after, the same rushing sound rose more clear upon the air—yet it might be the river—it might be a change of the wind which brought

the roaring of the sea along the shore : but suddenly the quick wild neigh of a war-horse mingled with the sound, and Bertrand, raising his horn to his lips, blew a long and loud alarm—

“To the walls ! to the walls ! The enemy ! the enemy ! Alerte ! alerte ! To the walls !” he shouted, and instantly the cry was echoed from voice to voice, from wall to wall, from house to house. Knights, and soldiers, and citizens hastened forward ; the couch was quitted in an instant, the armour buckled on, and forth to her ruined battlements Rhodes poured her armed children, while a thousand torches flashed along the streets, and withered the pale moonlight with their angry glare. But still was heard the rushing sound of the coming enemy, and soon, through the wreaths of the dewy mist, dark masses were seen moving onward, divested of all form and measure by the shadows of the night. Instantly, however, as the first trace of their line became discernible, a blaze of fire flashed over the walls of the city, and a thousand mouths of flame hurled death into their ranks. Then came a momentary pause, and then again the cannon opened upon the enemy, who were still seen rushing forward in the blaze ; but at that moment a roar more loud than that of all the cannon of the place, simultaneous, with a broad, red, sudden glare of intense light, rushed up from the bastion of Italy, while a thousand dark masses hurled into the air were seen mingled with the bright blaze, like the stones cast up by the first outbreak of a volcano.

The remnants of the shattered wall were still rolling and tottering after the explosion of the mine, when the janizaries rushed up through the breach in thousands, their dark countenances gleaming one behind the other in the light of the torches and of the fires on the ramparts, which shone red and strong on the forms of the first line, and faded gradually away amid a sea of grim features and turbaned heads behind. On the walls too, and in the breach, the fierce blaze lighted up the armour of the knights, and the morions and *rondaches* of the soldiers ; and while levelled lances, swords, bucklers,

casques, and axes filled up in an instant the wide gap the explosion had left, a thousand hands from the crenelles and battlements around hurled down stones, and boiling oil, and flaming tar upon the heads of the assailants. Scream, and shout, and clang, and roar rushed up fearfully from the bitter struggle of the earth to God's calm sky. Troop after troop of the infidels forced their way up into the breach, and every turbaned head was met by a waving blade, or hurled down by some impetuous lance; but still fresh forces thronged to the assault, and foot to foot, and man to man, and steel to steel they fought, sometimes kept at arm's length by the pike or sword, sometimes clasped together in close and deadly struggle, where the dagger and the knife ended all.

For near an hour Bertrand de la Croix had stood the foremost on a shattered mass of the wall, dealing death to every Moslem that came within the sweep of his rapid and untiring arm. A hundred shots from below had passed close to his head; a hundred swords had waved around him; thrice had some of the more daring Moslems singled him out, and rushing upon him with the spring of a tiger, had endeavoured to reach his fearless heart with the dagger, and thrice by a single blow, dealt with the quick precision of the lightning, had they been cast lifeless into the fosse beneath. At length the grand master himself stood by his side.

"Bertrand," he said, in a rapid voice, "you have out-done yourself: but quick, speed to the bastion of Auvergne; I see all the knights who should have been there to defend it have crowded hither. Your men, there, upon the rampart, are pouring down fire on the enemy: call part away to aid you, and should you find danger, send to me, and I will come to your support; but, above all things, speed! speed!"

Using the broken masses of the wall for steps, Bertrand was in a moment upon the battlements above; there he staid but to choose twenty of his bravest men, and then hurried with a foot of light towards the bastion of Auvergne. Every step that he took the wall became

more solitary ; all the defenders had hurried to the principal point of attack, and only here and there a simple sentinel stood looking towards the spot where his friends and fellow-christians were struggling with the enemy. Such was the case upon the bastion of Auvergne ; but the young soldier found that a still more lamentable fault had been committed on the Spanish side, where not only the knights had quitted their post to hurry to the fight, but the sentinels themselves were all employed in wheeling some cannon to an outwork, to point them against the stream of enemies that were still pouring up towards the great breach. Bertrand instantly commanded them to desist, and return to their post ; but before they had time to take ten steps towards the spot, a loud shout burst from the Spanish bastion, and the crescent of Mahomet was seen planted by the watch-fire, while the forms of the janizaries were beheld scattering themselves over the platform, and gathering materials for effecting a lodgment and defending their conquest.

The mind of Bertrand de la Croix instantly saw the only chance of recovery. "Fly to the grand master," he cried to one of his followers ; "tell him what has happened ! You of the bastion D'Auvergne, turn all your cannon on the Spanish platform, and cease not firing for a moment till you see this standard on the wall. Let the men in the traverse sweep the foot of the wall with their guns, so that no new reinforcement overpower us. And now, my brave comrades, once more, Death to the infidels ! Success ! Victory ! and good St. John !"

Thus saying, he turned from the wall, led his scanty band round behind the works, and while the artillery of the bastion of Auvergne played with terrific effect upon the Turks in the post of Spain, Bertrand penetrated by the casemate into the bastion, and with the white cross standard in one hand, and his sword in the other, reached the top of the platform, cast himself into the midst of the Turks, already broken and scattered by the fire, and after a severe struggle drove them once more through the breach. At the same moment he beheld

the rest of the infidel army retreating from the attack, and heard the general signals of recall; and now certain that the town was saved, he determined upon pursuing the fugitives. Without giving them a moment's pause, he followed them through the breach, hung upon their flank in the darkness, and urged their retreat into precipitate flight. Carried away, however, by the eager fire of his heart, he forgot the time and the distance, and followed the flyers almost to the Turkish camp; but the sight of the watch-fires and the lamps round some of the principal tents, within a few hundred yards, recalled him to himself, and he turned with his followers to find his way back to the city. They could plainly distinguish its dark walls, from which, every now and then, the flash of the cannon still continued; but Bertrand found himself embarrassed in the Turkish lines, though the trench near him seemed to have been the part of some approach which had been found useless, and in consequence was abandoned. While he considered its direction and calculated whither it led, he heard the tramp of armed men, and caught a faint glimpse of a strong body retreating from the city to the camp. Silent and speedily he descended with his men into the trench, and hastened back towards Rhodes. The body of janizaries he had seen passed him within a hundred yards, but without discovering him; and he marched for the city. The trench was evidently no longer used, and along all its angles and turnings Bertrand pursued his way undisturbed till he had nearly reached the town, where he encountered a small body of stragglers, who after a slight struggle dispersed in all directions, and sought safety in flight. The path now led directly to the Spanish bastion; but that spot which had been so neglected during the attack was now all bustling with soldiers, and the first reply to Bertrand's voice, as he shouted from below, was a cannon-shot. It boomed over the heads of his little band, however, without doing injury to any one, and he was soon recognised and admitted.

He found all the knights and officers, though wearied

and exhausted, full of the events of the night ; but there seemed also some other subject which occupied them deeply, for he remarked several knots gathered together speaking low and eagerly ; but as he had hitherto entertained little communication with any one, they suffered him to pass on without making him a sharer in their discussion. At length one of those men who cannot resist bestowing a part of the few ideas they gain upon every one they meet, demanded if he had heard that Sir Andrew de Merail, the chancellor of the order, had been arrested and confined in the tower of St. Nicolas for treasonable practices with the enemy ?

“Impossible !” exclaimed Bertrand, starting back with a degree of emotion no one had seen him evince before,—“impossible ! utterly impossible !”

“True, nevertheless,” dryly observed an old knight who stood near ; and Bertrand, seeing the eyes of many around fixed upon himself, regained at once his cold composure, and with somewhat like scorn upon his lip, retired, leaving them to comment as they chose.

CHAPTER V.

Haste then, and lose no time,
The business must be enterprised this night.
DRYDEN.

THE young soldier strode home to his dwelling in the lower town, wearied in body and depressed in mind. “A traitor !” he thought, “De Merail a traitor !—Was it possible ?—One who had so often shed his blood for the order of St. John—one who had ever shown himself a true knight though a haughty man !—And yet the arrow and the packet he had seen shot into the Turkish lines !—The common report among the knights that De Merail had said, on the failure of his own hopes of election, that Villiers de l’Isle Adam should be the last

Grand Master of Rhodes!—his slackness in the defence!—his pernicious counsels!”—all rushed upon the mind of the young knight, and though he would have given a world to believe De Merail innocent, he could not himself but doubt. He suffered his page to unclasp his armour and to bathe some slight wounds which he had received, and then casting himself down, he strove for sleep till morning.

He rose almost with the dawn and sought the palace of the grand master, but Villiers was deep in council and might not be disturbed. He then joined some of the knights of Castile, to which language De Merail belonged; but all he could hear of him was, that two knights grand crosses, together with the ordinary judges, were ordered to sit that very day upon his trial. Those who affected friendship for him shook the head in silence, and those whom his pride had offended boldly called him a traitor. Still Bertrand de la Croix resolved to see the grand master himself, and watching his moment when he visited the ramparts, he boldly approached him in behalf of the unfortunate man, who had so lately fallen from one of the highest and noblest grades of the order, to imprisonment and disgrace. But the moment his name was mentioned Villiers de l'Isle Adam sternly waved his hand.

“Sir Bertrand de la Croix,” he said, “stain not the honourable name you have acquired by deeds of unequalled courage in defence of Rhodes, by saying one word in favour of a convicted traitor. His peers and his judges have condemned him on evidence of his guilt, conclusive beyond all doubt, and to-morrow, as I live, he dies by the hand of the executioner. Answer not, sir; you are a gallant man, and we thank you for your services, but you have no voice in Rhodes!”

Bertrand's eye met that of the grand master with a glance of proud dignity equal to his own. “I come not, sir,” he said, “to speak for the guilty or the condemned: but not knowing that his trial had so quickly taken place, I came to remind you, Sir Villiers de l'Isle Adam, that he was your opponent at your election, and

to bid you see that free and fair justice was done him, as you would hold your good name throughout the world. 'This, sir, I came to tell you as gentleman to gentleman and knight to knight: and now, sir, I bid you farewell."

"Hold!" cried the grand master, as Bertrand turned away. "You speak, sir, somewhat too boldly, and yet your words touch upon painful truths. I feel—I know that the execution of Andrew de Merail may, in the world, be attributed to me as an unworthy vengeance. But I *have* done and *will* do justice to him and to all. He has been examined, tried, and judged by two noble and upright knights, who voted in his favour against my own election. It has been proved that he first called the infidel to our shores, and that he it has been who has betrayed all our secrets to the enemy. After patient investigation he has been condemned to death, and were he my dearest friend, my nearest kin, he should suffer the award.—Now, sir, to *you* farewell: I have wasted more words than befits me."

Each turned upon his path, and Bertrand de la Croix, seeking his own dwelling, gave himself up to bitter meditation. "Isabel!" muttered he, "Isabel! How will her heart be wrung! Yet, why need I think of her? Her father's fate will never reach her ears. Either those greedy and insatiate waves have reckoned my lost jewel among all the fair bright things they have entombed, or else some cursed pirate—but I will not—I dare not think of that;" and Bertrand covered his eyes with his hands and groaned in agony of spirit.

The hours passed by, and the dark edge of the horizon hid the last beaming spot of the setting sun, when the page of Sir Andrew de Merail stood before Bertrand de la Croix after carefully closing the door and drawing down the tapestry. "Well, boy, what news?" exclaimed the young soldier. "Bring you letter or message from your lord?—Quick!—Speak!"

"No letter have I, sir," answered the boy; "nor have I message but to bid you speedily to him in the prison. Take this friar's gown and this chaplet, Sir

Knight! The jailer is bribed, and the doors will open to you—and hasten to him, for life and death are upon your steps."

Bertrand paused for a moment, and thought—"It matters not!" cried he, at length; "it matters not!" and taking the gown and chaplet he drew the hood over his face, and strode onwards towards the sea; into which the tower of St. Nicolas, where De Merail was confined, projected on a sort of natural mole. No sentinel challenged him till he came near the tower, but there he was obliged to give the word at each post. His knowledge of the countersign, however, served him till he had entered the tower, and there inquiring in a feigned voice for the civil officer, in whose custody the prisoners were lodged, he found that his way had already been prepared by weighty bribes. He was instantly conducted into a small room, where the jailer made him uncover his head to satisfy himself of his identity. That being done, he led him through the long dim passages of the tower, whose melancholy gloom was heightened by the roaring of the sea, as it dashed against its base.

All passed in silence, and the only words exchanged were, when opening a strong door the officer bade him enter, whispering "Be quick."—"I will," replied the young soldier, and he passed into the cell. A table, a chair, a bed, and a lamp were all the moveables it contained, and in the midst stood Andrew de Merail, with a thousand deep channels and lines in his brow and cheek, wrought by the passing of a single dreadful day. His eye was still, however, full of fire and light, and his brow was lit with stern determination; but the stiff curls of his gray hair seemed to have relaxed their bend, and hung wildly over his brow and cheek; and there was a quivering eagerness about his lip, which spoke the restless and perturbed soul within.

"You have come!" cried he, as Bertrand entered, and the jailer closed the door behind him. "You have come! I thought you would—this is no moment for fears or hesitation!—But mark me, sir—I sent not for

you on my own account !—No !—they might have torn my old limbs with red-hot pincers, ere I would have claimed aid of mortal man. But my daughter—*my Isabel—your Isabel—our beloved*, must be saved.”

“Ha !” exclaimed Bertrand, in the same rapid, almost incoherent manner ; “have you heard of her ? Where is she ? How can she be succoured ?—Speak, my lord !—speak !”

“Only by one earthly means,” replied De Merail. “Till my child was involved, whatever were my plans, I sought no earthly aid ; content, if I rose, to triumph singly, and if I fell, to fall alone. But now, sir, you must aid me, and if your heart quail or hesitate but as a strong lance trembles to a light wind, you are false and faithless to your love, and give her tamely to the polluting arms of a base infidel. Look you—you read the *lingua franca*,—construe me that,” and he drew from his bosom a roll of paper, which he placed in the hand of his companion. Bertrand approached the light and read.

THE LETTER.

“*Peri Bacha of Patras to De Merail, one of the chiefs of the Corsairs of Rhodes.*

“The high and mighty Sultaun Solimaun, Emperor of the World, wills me to tell thee, oh ! faithless Giaour, that doubting the truth and honesty of thy counsels, which have as yet proved only fatal and detrimental to the armies of the Prophet, he has found a means to ensure thy sincerity, or to punish thee in its default. Know then, oh son of a perverted race ! that a Frankish girl has been taken by Courtogli, the faithful servant of the sublime sultaun, who, declaring herself thy daughter, has been kept as a pledge and hostage of thy faith. If, according to thy treaty, thou dost deliver into the hands of the servants of the prophet this stronghold of Christian robbers, the sovereignty of Cyprus shall be secured unto thee, according to the un-

broken word of the monarch of the monarchs of the earth; and the maiden thy daughter shall be restored to thy arms pure and uninjured as she left thee. But if thou failest in that which I am about to prescribe to thee, she shall become the slave of the lowest groom of the sultaun's stables, and when Rhodes shall have fallen, thou thyself shalt be torn to pieces by wild horses. Know, then, that to-morrow night the armies of the Prophet will once more march to the storm: two hours after the evening prayer a false attack will be made upon the bastion which the Giaours call that of Italy, but the real one will be against that of Auvergne. See that not a gun be fired from that bastion, for thy daughter's tent is within reach of its fire; and see also, that when the soldiers of the Prophet plant his standard upon the post of Auvergne, not a Giaour be found in arms upon that point, and that thou art ready to aid the servants of the Most High. Do this and thou shalt live."

As Bertrand de la Croix read, the eye of the unhappy De Merail fixed upon his countenance with intense and agonizing scrutiny. The muscles of his face were drawn and tense, and his strong marked features were sharpened and almost distorted with the world of busy passions that were thronging at his heart: but when the young soldier had finished, and he saw the proud stern scorn that gathered in his eye, rage took the place of fear and expectation, and with threats and imprecations he sought to drive him to his purpose.

"Was he the lover," he asked, "who would sacrifice life and all that life was worth for her he loved—yes, he who dared risk nothing?"

And then again he menaced him with accusations before the council of the order, and threatened to charge him with participation in his own crimes. Wildly and volubly he poured forth a torrent of mingled argument, intimidation, inducement, and supplication. But Bertrand de la Croix listened with firm, unshaken mind.

"Unhappy man," he said at length, "I would not be the thing you think me—no! not for a million empires.

I will save *your* child, *my* Isabel, or die: but stain my knighthood and betray my trust is what I never will do. Fare you well, and God have mercy on you!" and casting down the letter he turned to quit the cell.

The heart of De Merail was bowed to the earth. "Leave me not! leave me not!" he cried,—*"stay, stay, oh stay!"* and he laid his hand with an uncertain grasp upon the friar's robe that covered the young soldier. Bertrand turned for an instant with a glance of painful pity: De Merail relaxed his hold, covered his eyes with his hands, and exclaiming, "Oh God! oh God!" suffered him to depart.

When Bertrand issued forth from the tower of St. Nicolas, the whole earth was covered with deep darkness. The Moslems' hour of evening prayer was past, and the moment which was to bring the new attack and to seal the fate of her he loved far better than existence was hurrying on; but still he turned his steps to the palace of the grand master, and demanded earnestly to speak with him on business of life and death, but Villiers refused to see him, and Bertrand turned upon his path.

In a few minutes all his men were collected, and equipping himself in the lightest armour he could find, Bertrand prepared to leave the city by the sally-port of the post of Auvergne, indignantly leaving the grand master to meet the coming danger as best he might. But still as he was about to turn away he paused for a moment—

"No, no!" cried he at length; "he must be warned. Perchance he thought I came to plead for a guilty traitor. Get thee back, Dufarrel; go to the gate of the grand master's palace: besiege it closely; seek to speak with him, and leave it not at all events till you see him come forth. Tell him to look to the bastion of Auvergne, for that I have good reason to believe *there* will be the greatest struggle, wherever the Turks may feign their first attack; and if I return not before dawn to-morrow, give him this ring with your own hands, and tell him I am dead."

The soldier refused not to obey, although he murmured somewhat about quitting his lord. He hurried quickly, however, to the grand master's palace, and twice sought to speak with him; but was twice refused admittance, as Villiers de l'Isle Adam was deeply busied in a council of the order. At length an outcry from the western side called his attention as he stood watching at the gate for the grand master's coming forth. Shouts and exclamations were heard, and the roar of artillery grew loud and frequent. Forgetting the orders he had received he rushed with all speed towards the scene of strife, but ere he had gone far his master's commands flashed across his memory, and he turned with the same haste to seek the palace gate again. Before he reached it, however, and panting and out of breath with the speed he had put forth to remedy his error, he suddenly encountered Villiers himself hurrying on foot towards the Italian ramparts, followed by a crowd of knights and soldiers.

The grand master mistook the object of his haste. "What! flying!" he exclaimed, striking him with his gauntlet. "Back to the ramparts, caitiff! for by heaven if thou fightest not like a man thou shalt die like a dog. Speak not! back, I say!" and again he struck him with his armed hand. The soldier glared upon him for a moment as if he would have smote him in return, and then turning suddenly round he darted away, reached the bastion of Italy, and mingled in the fray.

CHAPTER VI.

For I must love, and am resolved to try
My fate, or, failing in the adventure, die.

DRYDEN.

THE moon was hidden in clouds, and not a star was to be seen in the heavens when Bertrand and his men glided forth from the sally-port of the post of Auvergne. Darkness spread all around them, and a few twinkling lamps in the Turkish camp was the only guide to their footsteps; but most of the party had crossed and recrossed that plain so often in the various sorties which had taken place, that scarce a step of the ground was unknown to them; and they advanced fearlessly, though cautiously, down the slope of the hill, till they reached a small clump of bushes and stunted trees about a quarter of a mile distant from the first tents of the Turkish encampment. No sallies had of late taken place on the part of the garrison, for their numbers were too small to risk unnecessary loss; and the infidels, except when urging some night attack, had slept in peace, so that, buried in perfect security, small precautions were taken against any efforts of the Christians.

So well had Bertrand chosen his way that not a sentinel had been met; but now he paused behind the bushes, for at no great distance lay a post of Turkish soldiers. At the same time he knew not whether the trench by which he had returned the night before, and which lay close beside him, might not form the line of advance for the Turkish troops upon the post of Auvergne; and he was determined to wait till a part at least had passed by before he attempted to execute the bold adventure on which he was bent. During this temporary halt he told his men the hazardous nature of the action before them, and finding all willing to fol-

low him to death itself, he allotted them their several duties clearly and precisely, and then crouching with them under the bushes, waited for the passing of the Moslem storming parties.

It is needless to dwell long upon his thoughts during the few minutes he thus remained. Life and death, as far as he himself was concerned, and deliverance or degradation to her he loved, were the stakes for which he played his bold and fearful game: but the bitter memory of her father's treason and near-approaching fate hung heavy upon his mind, and mingled with many a painful thought for the future. But still the great excitement of his present enterprise occupied his first thoughts; and though, when the idea of De Merail's fate flashed across his mind, a chill and painful feeling would gather round his heart, yet his whole senses were alive to what was passing around, and not a leaf fell from the trees above him but was marked by his keen ear. As he lay the sound of a gradually gathering host was heard from the Turkish camp,—the whispered commands, the stealthy movements, the muffled arms; and then the measured but soft tread of men tutored to silence. A large body was evidently advancing, and they could be seen interposing as a dense mass between the spot where he lay and the lights in the Turkish camp. They came near—more near—skirted the very bushes, and passed on, file after file, towards the city. Another mass of many thousands might be just distinguished as they crossed some faint streaks of struggling light upon the edge of the horizon; but they too moved on, and then there was a pause. Bertrand lifted his head and listened, but instantly bent down again, while a third and larger body still poured on at a short distance. It was clear that on this great effort Soliman sent forth the whole of his multitude.

Silence succeeded, and then advancing gently to the trench which had not been occupied, Bertrand and his companions stole forward to the Turkish camp. As they advanced they could distinguish on a hill at half a mile's distance a sort of scaffolding with several

torches round about it, together with a large body of cavalry, and on the scaffolding itself several human figures, apparently gazing towards the fortress. Between his party and the camp was a line of sentinels scattered at considerable distances, and the one nearest the extremity of the disused trench had been seduced away to speak with his companion at some distance. Just behind was a village of pioneers' huts, but they were all dark and deserted, and behind them were some lighted tents just within the range of the guns on the bastion of Auvergne, and Bertrand doubted not that there lay all that he valued in the world. The sentinel was evidently deep in conversation with his companion, and, one by one, Bertrand and two of his comrades stole across and hid themselves in the darkness of the pioneers' huts. As a fourth was going to pass, however, the sentinel turned back and resumed his post; but Bertrand knew that the soldier that was next to follow was bold and skilful, and well versed in the Turkish tongue, and he paused anxiously to see how he would accomplish his passage.

The sentinel turned slowly backwards and forwards for some time—then pausing to listen, he leaned upon his arquebuse; but at that moment with one spring the Christian soldier was upon him—his hand clasped upon his mouth, his foot upon the match of his gun, and his dagger in his heart. The slight rustle of a momentary struggle and a deep groan was all that was heard, and before the other sentinel had turned from the round he was making, the Christian soldier, with the turban of the dead man on his head, and his arquebuse on his shoulder, was slowly parading in a different direction, so as completely to deceive his eye, and make him think that his companion, having resumed his post, was not willing to risk any further conversation. Each time the Turkish sentry—whose post was about two hundred yards from the spot—turned in his walk, two or three of Bertrand's men passed across into the shadow of the huts; and when the whole were thus within the lines, he himself advanced cautiously towards

the lighted tents, in one of which he doubted not that Isabel de Merail was confined. Keeping carefully in the shadow he advanced between two, and bending down his ear listened to some voices that were speaking within; but the language employed was Turkish, and the tone not that of her he loved. Still he listened for a moment longer, when from the other tent on his left he could hear a noise as of a dog running quickly round the inside of the canvass walls, and with a low sort of whine of pleasure seeming to recognise him, and to welcome his approach.

"What ails thee, Querida? What ails thee?" cried the voice of Isabel, a moment after. "Alas! alas! He that thou wert wont so to greet in other days is no longer near."

Bertrand beckoned forward his followers, and bade them be prepared to second him in a moment, if he found any one in the inner tent besides Isabel herself. Some one was beyond all doubt on guard in the outer tent, but he effected a shorter means of entrance for himself by drawing his dagger, and at once ripping the canvass down to the ground. The hangings with which it was lined were easily removed, and Bertrand stood within the tent. Isabel was alone, and the instant she saw him, she sprang forward to his arms with a faint cry of delight.—Some one moved in the outer tent, and conscious that their safety greatly depended on the secrecy of their escape, Bertrand drew back behind the hangings, and Isabel with instinctive quickness stooped to fondle her dog. At the same instant, the grim head of a eunuch was thrust in, but seeing nothing to excite suspicion was immediately withdrawn, and in a moment after Isabel was in the free air by her lover's side. No words were spoken; all was comprehended at once; but Bertrand hurried forward to the spot where his follower still kept guard, to all appearance a Turkish sentinel, and there bore Isabel across the open space in his arms to the mouth of the deserted trench. The other sentinel had extended his parade farther than usual; all the followers of the young

Christian passed unobserved, and thus, as will sometimes happen, one of the most bold and hazardous attempts that the mind of man could conceive was executed without difficulty, and with no singular event in its course.

In the deep darkness which still continued, Bertrand hastened with her he loved, fixing his eyes upon the dim lines of the city, which were scarcely to be distinguished from the deep obscurity of the sky. Suddenly there was a quick flash upon the Italian bastion, and then came the report of a single cannon. The moment after, the whole walls were in a blaze, and the stillness of the night was swallowed up in the roar of artillery. On! on! Bertrand sped, sometimes leading Isabel by the hand, sometimes carrying her in his arms, as the ground permitted; but still hoping to reach the bastion of Auvergne before the false attack upon the post of Italy had been abandoned, and the real one commenced on the other point. The balls of the cannon sang over their heads as they advanced, and sometimes striking the ground near them, dashed a shower of sand into the trench, while each minute the roar of the artillery became louder, the shouts and cries of the combatants mingled with the sound; and through the clouds of smoke that began to envelop them the flaming mouths of the cannons might be seen, pouring death and destruction on the very path they were pursuing.

Isabel trembled in every limb, and for her the stout heart of Bertrand felt sensations he had never experienced for himself. Nearer, more near they came, and for a moment turned from the thick of the fire, and approached the bastion of Auvergne. The ramparts at that point were but thinly manned, and Bertrand, carrying Isabel in his arms, shouted loud to the soldiers to give him entrance.

He was soon recognised, and some movements were made to admit him; but at that moment a large body of the Turkish infantry wheeled upon the spot where he was standing. Not a moment was to be lost. The

janizaries were advancing with the speed of lightning to the attack of the bastion;—every instant brought them nearer:—the warder at the sally-port was fearful and unsteady; and seeing no other way of escape, Bertrand rushed up over the ruins of the breach which the Turkish artillery had effected during the day, while a tremendous discharge of shot and arrows took place around him. Agitation, fatigue, and terror now completely overwhelmed the unfortunate girl he carried in his arms. The flash and the roar of the cannon, the shouts, the cries, the yells, the strange fierce faces and armed forms she had seen around her on every side, all in a moment faded before her mind, and she fainted away in the arms of her lover. Staggering up over the unsteady ruins of the wall, Bertrand struggled on, but towards the top a large stone gave way, and nearly cast him back to the ground. At the same time a strong soldier, who knew him, held down his arms from above to reach the beautiful, but apparently lifeless form he carried. The Turks were close behind his steps—each moment hazarded her life, and Bertrand intrusted Isabel to the hands of the honest soldier, exclaiming—“Quick to my house! I will take your place.” The man, stooping far over, received her in his arms as a father would his infant, and bore her instantly from that scene of bloodshed and death. In the mean while Bertrand again endeavoured to climb the last few steps, but there the stones were looser than below; and as he rushed on, losing nearly as much ground as he gained, the Turks also began to climb the breach. Bertrand saw that they would reach him before he could arrive at the top, and was about to form his men as best he could even where they stood; but at that moment the grand master, perceiving the real direction the Turkish attack had now taken, hastened to the bastion D’Auvergne.

As he sprang forward towards the breach, followed by all the knights and soldiers he could collect, the first object his eye fell upon was Bertrand de la Croix, leading on—as it appeared—the Turkish soldiers to the

assault. Where he stood, the short space between the young soldier and the Turks was nearly lost to his sight; the knights who accompanied the grand master were deceived like himself, and crying out upon the imagined treason, they threw themselves into the breach.

Bertrand gladly beheld them coming, as he thought, to his assistance, but, to his surprise, he was in a moment struck to the ground, seized, and disarmed; and while shoulder to shoulder, and shield clasped to shield, the knights of St. John opposed to the Turks the same dauntless, unconquerable front with which they had met all former attacks, one of their most gallant supporters was carried bound and bleeding to the criminal prison in the tower of St. Nicolas.

CHAPTER VII.

Peace, good reader! do not weep—
Peace! the lovers are asleep:
They, sweet turtles, folded lie
In the last knot that love could tie.
Let them sleep!—let them sleep on,
Till this stormy night be gone,
And the eternal morrow dawn;
Then the curtains shall be drawn;
And they waken with that light,
Whose day shall never sleep in night.

CRASHAW.

THE fight had passed by, the attack of the Turks was again repulsed, and morning had taken the place of night, when Bertrand de la Croix was led, bound and guarded, from the prison in which he had spent the last eight hours to the palace of the grand master. As he passed through the great square, he was met by four men carrying a dead body covered with a cloth, and a little farther on he beheld a scaffold, a block, and an axe, with bloody evidences around of their having been lately used for the purposes of death. At the same time, from the scattered groups of spectators, who were separating

after the fatal scene they had witnessed, he heard frequently pronounced the name "De Merail," and the appellation of "hardened traitor."

Bertrand required no other comment, and without question suffered himself to be led on in silence. After arriving at the buildings which were called the inns of the order, he was detained for a few moments, and had an opportunity of observing the ravages which war had already made. More than one-half of the lodgings seemed vacant, and the groans of the dying and wounded knights brought home from the last assault rendered the hall but a melancholy resting-place. At length the door of the council-chamber was opened for him, and he was brought before the tribunal of the order.

At the end of a long table, in a seat a little raised above the rest, sat the grand master; his features worn and channeled with toil and anxiety, and his garments apparently unchanged since the combat of the preceding night. Several of the higher officers of the brotherhood were placed around him, and the rest of the table was filled with knights commanders and grand crosses. Bertrand placed himself at once opposite the chief of the military fraternity, and encountered his grave dark eye with a glance, firm, calm, and dignified as his own.

"It is a melancholy task, Sir Bertrand de la Croix," said the grand master, after a momentary pause, "to judge and sentence treachery and treason—things, we would fain believe, which could not exist with gallantry and courage. Nevertheless, in the case of the unhappy man who died this morning, we had proof that such a union of crimes and virtues may take place, and we have strong reason to believe that in you also we have an example of the same. Putting aside what we ourselves beheld, we have this morning examined various witnesses whose evidence seems conclusive of your guilt. Yet still, whatever you can bring forward in your own defence shall be listened to attentively, and have all due weight; for, God knows, we would willingly believe you innocent. The specific charge against you is, having leagued with the Turks, in concert with Andrew

de Merail, once a knight of this order, and having communicated with the enemy, favoured his enterprises, and finally led him on to the attack last night, by which Rhodes has been more injured and her garrison more weakened than by the whole of the previous siege. The facts already proved against you are, that you were the constant friend and companion of the traitor De Merail—that you visited him disguised last night in prison, and in consequence of a letter from the Turkish commander, Peri, found upon his person, that you concerted with him the means of giving up the city to the Turks, by withdrawing your men from the bastion of Auvergne—that you went yourself to the Turkish camp; and that, in the certainty of success, you yourself, with the men you had brought to Rhodes, led on the infidel troops in their fatal attack of the very post to which you were attached. The witnesses are the page of the traitor Andrew de Merail, the jailer of the tower of St. Nicolas, two soldiers who opened for you the sally-port of the post of Auvergne, and five knights of St. John, who with ourselves witnessed the fact of your leading on the janizaries to the breach last night.”

“Good faith, Sir Villiers de l’Isle Adam,” replied the young soldier, “were the matter less than life and death it would make me smile to see how cunningly a chain of evidence may be woven against an innocent man. Frown not, sir! I charge you not with seeking the death of one who never injured you. I believe you to be a good knight and true if ever was: but still I beg you to remember what communication I ever held with the infidels since first I set my foot in Rhodes. That I have leagued with them I acknowledge, but it was as the tiger leagues with the wild bull, for mutual destruction. That I have communicated with them—true! but it has been with my sword-edge to their brows and my dagger in their hearts. They are my dear companions in arms!—are they not? Have you not, all of you, seen us mingle our hearts’ blood together in trench and in the breach, and holding each other to our bosoms, let nothing part us but death. Fy, fy!

ye knights of Rhodes, is it thus ye repay your soldiers? True, grand master, I did visit De Merail in prison,—true, I did read the letter from the Bacha Peri,—true, I did go to the Turkish camp, but with no friendly intent; and before I set my foot beyond the walls of Rhodes I came to warn you of your danger, if you would be warned, but you refused me your presence. Even then I sent one of my followers to seek you, to watch for you, and to tell you to guard the bastion of Auvergne, for there would be the true attack. Doubtless he did his duty, and why you repeat not now that fact I cannot tell. Last night, however, was not my night to watch the bastion of Auvergne, therefore I took not my men from their duty when I sallied out to the Turkish camp; nor did I go thither to league with enemies of the faith, but to save from their hands a lady and my love; and where is the knight who dares to say I did not right?"

Bertrand de la Croix now proceeded to give an exact detail of all that had occurred during the preceding night, and it was evident that the simple truth of the story had some effect. His manner was calm and dignified, although there was less of that cold haughtiness in it than he usually displayed; but still the brow of the grand master and of the elder knights retained their stern aspect, and after a brief consultation Villiers de l'Isle Adam replied,—

"Your story, sir, is plausible; but we have no proof, even though the deliverance of this captive lady might take place through your means, that you did not betray the city to the Turks as the means of gaining her. The fact of your having sought for me may have taken place—the fact of your having sent me warning or message never did. No such warning reached me. However, fearful of doing injustice, though resolved to punish where punishment is deserved, we give you two hours to seek through the whole town the messenger you despatched; choose from the knights of St. John any two in whom you may place confidence, and on their knighthood let them use every means

within that time to produce any proof that you even attempted to warn the order of the danger you knew was about to befall it. "Make your selection, and God speed their endeavours!"

"You, Sir John de Real, and you, Sir Oliver de Braissac," replied the prisoner, addressing two of the knights present, "if in your good courtesy you will so far trouble yourselves, I will beg you to seek for one Peter Dufarrel; first let him be inquired for among my own followers, and then through the town. Bring him before the council—let him be fairly questioned what were his lord's last commands before setting forth on his expedition last night. If he speak not as I have spoken, strike off my head!"

The knights willingly undertook the task. Bertrand was removed, and the bonds taken from his hands; but moment after moment passed and no tidings of comfort or consolation reached him. An hour went by and then another, and Bertrand was again led to the council-chamber of the order; the cloud had gathered deeper than before on the brow of the grand master.

"The knights you yourself chose," he said, in a slow and solemn voice, addressing the young soldier, "have searched town and castle in vain for the person you have named, and on their honour they cannot discover him; the council have heard your case and have patiently examined it all. Traitors must not be left unpunished, and it is, therefore, my painful duty to doom you to death, Sir Bertrand de la Croix!"

"Hold!" exclaimed the young soldier, in a firm, deep, powerful voice, in the clear steady tone of which no note of fear could be heard. "Hold, Villiers de l'Isle Adam! and call me not Bertrand de la Croix. Say, rather, Francis, Duke of Nivelles—yes, sir,—your nephew, and the chief of your own house! Now forward with your sentence—now that you know that the innocent blood you are about to shed is kindred to your own;" and placing his hat and plume upon his head he fixed his proud dark eye full upon the countenance of the grand master.

A convulsive motion, springing from the agony of his heart, passed twice over the face of Villiers de l'Isle Adam; but still the struggle to do his duty and his high sense of impartial justice wrought powerfully against the bonds of kindred and affection. His clenched hand wrung the arm of the chair in which he sat, his features became drawn and haggard, his lip quivered, his eye strained upon the fine noble countenance of his nephew, and then, after several attempts, he staggered up from his seat and strove to speak. Words at first were wanting, but at length, with a dreadful effort, he repeated twice, "I doom you to death! I doom you to death!"

"Not so! not so!" cried several of the knights present. "Hold, my lord! hold!" But at that moment the door of the hall was forced open, and a pale ghastly man, covered with bloody bandages, rushed into the hall, followed by several surgeons of the hospital, who strove in vain to hold him.

"He is delirious," cried a surgeon; "let him not near the grand master!—he is delirious from a wound on his head, and raving about some ring."

But the wounded man strode on, noticing no one in the hall, and with a rapidity that permitted no interruption. He approached the grand master, cast himself at his feet, and holding up a ring, he exclaimed, "I am not mad, my lord! Last night, my noble master, the Duke of Nivelle, when sallying forth against the Turks, bade me warn you to look to the bastion of Auvergne. If he returned not before the dawn I was to give you this ring, and tell you that he is dead. You struck me last night and called me coward when I came to warn you as my lord commanded. Strike me again if you will—I am ready to die, for my lord is dead, and I have done his bidding!"

"God of Heaven!" cried the grand master. "Pardon me, a sinner!—my rash haste has caused me to strike an innocent man, and nearly hurried me on to spill the guiltless blood of my own brother's son."

* * * * *

But few words now remain to be said and few explanations to be given. The faithful follower to whom the Duke of Nivelles had intrusted his message to the grand master, after having been driven, as we have seen, back to the ramparts, mingled in the thickest of the fight in order to shame the name of coward, with which he had been branded. He soon fell under several wounds, and was carried to the hospital of the order, where he raved wildly during the night of the grand master and the Duke of Nivelles, a name unknown in the town of Rhodes. In the morning he asked wildly if the duke had returned, and the surgeons fancying him delirious, replied in the negative. He then strove to rise, but was prevented for some hours, at the end of which, however, he watched his opportunity, forced his way out, and reached the presence of the grand master as detailed above.

The innocence of the young Duke of Nivelles was now fully established, and he easily explained to his uncle the circumstances which had led to the cold reserve and concealment he had adopted. Having met and loved Isabel de Merail in Spain, he had determined to win her by high deeds in favour of that order to which her father had devoted himself. But his own uncle, the grand master, having refused the alliance when pressed in former days, the young lover was afraid that his scheme would meet opposition and obstruction if he made himself known to his relation, from whose memory fifteen years had obliterated all traces of his person. Lest any casual circumstance should betray his secret also, he imposed upon himself a stern system of reserve, which he only broke through towards the father of her he loved; nor did he reveal himself to him till he had won his regard. De Merail, who had already bound himself to the Turks, gladly seized a fresh means of punishing, as he thought, the rival who had borne away the highest dignity of the order from the hand he stretched to grasp it, and willingly promised his daughter to the Duke of Nivelles, though he had at one time

declared that fire and water should as soon unite as his race with that of Villiers de l'Isle Adam.

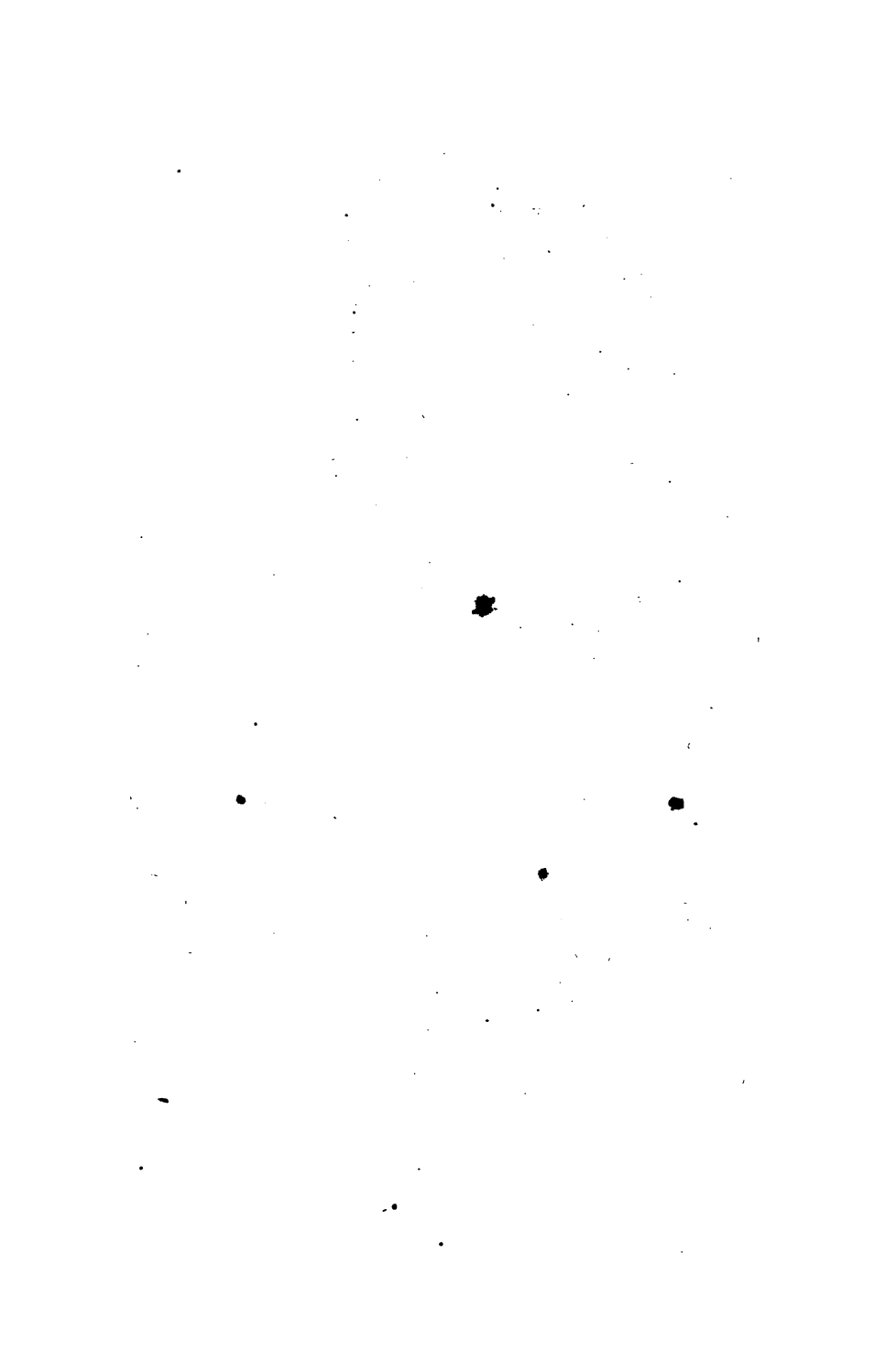
When many mutual explanations had been given between the grand master and his nephew, the mind of the gallant knight of Rhodes reverted to all the splendid deeds he had seen the young soldier perform in defence of the order, and clasping him to his bosom, he exclaimed, "How—how could I ever think you guilty? But tell me, tell me, Nivelles—for it weighs like a load upon my heart, that the same fatal errors which had nearly led to your death may have brought that wretched man De Merail to the block without cause; tell me, was his sentence just?"

"Be your heart at rest," replied the duke. "He well deserved his fate: but if I have served the order of Rhodes—if I have shed my blood in its defence, never let the manner of his death reach his daughter's ears. Let it be buried in silence and hid in the bosom of the order, for I would not for a world that my bride's cheek should burn with the knowledge that her father was a traitor."

Nor did she ever know it. Nivelles soon clasped her again to his bosom, and did away all her fears for his own safety. He had still, however, the hard task of breaking to her the loss of her parent, although his devotion to the order of St. John had long deprived her of his immediate care and near affection. To her dying-day she believed that he had fallen gallantly in the defence of Rhodes, and in after-years when that island was mentioned, though she thought of it with a sigh, there mingled with her sorrow a touch of that pride with which the knights themselves remembered their long, glorious resistance.

As all men know, Rhodes at length fell, but it was not till her bulwarks were levelled with the ground, and her defenders reduced to less than a hundredth part of the force that assailed them. Even then a proud capitulation gave glory both to the living and the dead; and sailing away from the island for which they had

so nobly fought, the grand master and his knights anchored at Setia, in the island of Candia, where Isabel de Merail gave her hand to him who had so long possessed her heart. The morning of their affection broke in storms and tempests, but now, when once the clouds had passed away, the hours sped on in sunshine and tranquillity, and a bright calm evening closed the long summer-day of their existence.



HADDAD-BEN-AHAB;

OR,

THE TRAVELLER.

A TALE OF STAMBOUL

BY JOHN GALT.

"Gramercy, Sir Traveller, it marvels me how you can carry between one pair of shoulders the weight of your heavy wisdom. Alack, now!—would you but discourse me of the wonders you saw ayont the antipodes!

"Peace, ignominious!—'tis too good for thy ass's ears to listen to. The world shall get it, catenized in a great book."

The Traveller and the Simpleton.

HADDAD-BEN-AHAB was a very wise man, and he had several friends men of discernment, and partakers of the wisdom of ages; but they were not all so wise as Haddad-Ben-Ahab. His sentences were short, but his knowledge was long, and what he predicted generally came to pass, for he did not pretend to the gift of prophecy. The utmost he ever said in that way was, that he expected the sun to rise to-morrow, and that old age was the shadow of youth.

Besides being of a grave temperament, Haddad-Ben-Ahab was inclined to obesity; he was kindly and good-natured to the whole human race; he even carried his benevolence to the inferior creation, and often patted his dogs on the head and gave them bones; but cats he could not abide. Had he been a rat he could not have regarded them with more antipathy; and yet Haddad-Ben-Ahab was an excellent man, who smoked

his chibouque with occasional cups of coffee and sherbet, interspersed with profound aphorisms on the condition of man, and conjectures on the delights of paradise.

With his friends he passed many sunbright hours; and if much talk was not heard among them on these occasions, be it remembered that silence is often wisdom. The scene of their social resort was a little kiosk in front of one of the coffee-houses on the bank of the Tigris. No place in all Bagdad is so pleasantly situated. There the mighty river rolls in all the affluence of his waters, pure as the unclouded sky, and speckled with innumerable boats, while the rippling waves, tickled, as it were, by the summer breezes, gambol and sparkle around.

The kiosk was raised two steps from the ground; the interior was painted with all the most splendid colours. The roof was covered with tiles that glittered like the skin of the Arabian serpent, and was surmounted with a green dragon, which was painted of that imperial hue, because Haddad-Ben-Ahab was descended from the sacred progeny of Fatima, of whom green is the everlasting badge, as it is of nature. Time cannot change it, nor can it be impaired by the decrees of tyranny or of justice.

One beautiful day Haddad-Ben-Ahab and his friends had met in this kiosk of dreams, and were socially enjoying the fragrant smoke of their pipes, and listening to the refreshing undulations of the river, as the boats softly glided along—for the waters lay in glossy stillness—the winds were asleep—even the sunbeams seemed to rest in a slumber on all things. The smoke stood on the chimney-tops as if a tall visionary tree grew out of each; and the many-coloured cloths in the yard of Orooblis, the Armenian dier, hung unmolested by a breath. Orooblis himself was the only thing, in that soft and bright noon, which appeared on the land to be animated with any purpose.

Orooblis was preparing a boat to descend the Tigris, and his servants were loading it with bales of apparel and baskets of provisions, while he himself was in a

great bustle, going often between his dwelling-house and the boat, talking loud and giving orders, and ever and anon wiping his forehead, for he was a man that delighted in having an ado.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab seeing Orooblis so active, looked at him for some time; and it so happened that all the friends at the same moment took their amber-headed pipes from their lips, and said—

“Where can Orooblis, the Armenian dier, be going?”

Such a simultaneous interjection naturally surprised them all, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab added—

“I should like to go with him, and see strange things, for I have never been out of the city of Bagdad, save once to pluck pomegranates in the garden of Beys-Addy-Book.” And he then rose and went to the boat which Orooblis was loading, and spoke to him; and when it was ready they seated themselves on board and sailed down the Tigris, having much pleasant discourse concerning distant lands and hills whose tops pierced the clouds, and were supposed to be the pillars that upheld the crystal dome of the heavens.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab rejoiced greatly as they sailed along, and at last they came to a little town, where Orooblis, having business in die-stuffs to transact, went on shore, leaving his friend. But in what corner of the earth this little town stood Haddad-Ben-Ahab knew not; for, like other travellers, he was not provided with much geographical knowledge.

But soon after the departure of Orooblis he thought he would also land and inquire. Accordingly, taking his pipe in his hand, he stepped out of the boat and went about the town, looking at many things, till he came to a wharf where a large ship was taking merchandise on board; and her sailors were men of a different complexion from that of the watermen who plied on the Tigris at Bagdad.

Haddad-Ben-Ahab looked at them, and as he was standing near to where they were at work, he thought that this ship afforded a better opportunity than he had enjoyed with Orooblis to see foreign countries. He accordingly went up to the captain and held out a handful of

money, and indicated that he was desirous to sail away with the ship.

When the captain saw the gold he was mightily civil, and spoke to Haddad-Ben-Ahab with a loud voice, perhaps thinking to make him hear was the way to make him understand. But Haddad-Ben-Ahab only held up the forefinger of his right hand and shook it to and fro. In the end, however, he was taken on board the ship, and no sooner was he there than he sat down on a sofa, and drawing his legs up under him kindled his pipe and began to smoke, much at his ease, making observations with his eyes as he did so.

The first observation Haddad-Ben-Ahab made was, that the sofa on which he had taken his place was not at all like the sofas of Bagdad, and therefore when he returned he would show that he had not travelled without profit by having one made exactly similar for his best chamber, with hens and ducks under it, pleasantly feeding and joyously kackling and quacking. And he also observed a remarkable sagacity in the ducks, for when they saw he was a stranger, they turned up the sides of their heads and eyed him in a most curious and inquisitive manner—very different, indeed, to the ducks of Bagdad.

When the ship had taken on board her cargo, she spread her sails, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab felt himself in a new situation; for presently she began to lie over, and to plunge and revel among the waves like a glad creature. But Haddad-Ben-Ahab became very sick, and the captain showed him the way down into the inside of the vessel, where he went into a dark bed, and was charitably tended by one of the sailors for many days.

After a season there was much shouting on the-deck of the ship, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab crawled out of his bed, and went to the sofa, and saw that the ship was near the end of her voyage.

When she had come to a bank where those on board could step out, Haddad-Ben-Ahab did so; and after he had seen all the strange things which were in the town where he thus landed, he went into a baker's shop—

for they eat bread in that town as they do in Bagdad—and bought a loaf, which having eaten, he quenched his thirst at a fountain hard by, in his ordinary manner of drinking, at which he wondered exceedingly.

When he had solaced himself with all the wonders of that foreign city, he went to a fakier, who was holding two horses ready saddled; beautiful they were, and, as the fakier signified by signs, their hoofs were so fleet that they left the wind behind them. Haddad-Ben-Ahab then showed the fakier his gold, and mounted one of the horses, pointing with the shaft of his pipe to the fakier to mount the other; and then they both rode away into the country, and they found that the wind blew in their faces.

At last they came to a caravansary, where the fakier bought a cooked hen and two onions, of which they both partook, and stretching themselves before the fire which they had lighted in their chamber, they fell asleep and slept until the dawn of day, when they resumed their journey into remoter parts and nearer to the wall of the world, which Haddad-Ben-Ahab conjectured they must soon reach. They had not, however, journeyed many days in the usual manner when they came to the banks of a large river, and the fakier would go no farther with his swift horses. Haddad-Ben-Ahab was in consequence constrained to pay and part from him, and to embark in a ferry-boat to convey him over the stream, where he found a strange vehicle with four horses standing ready to carry him on towards the wall of the world, "which surely," said he to himself, "ought not to be now far off."

Haddad-Ben-Ahab showed his gold again, and was permitted to take a seat in the vehicle, which soon after drove away; and he remarked in a most sagacious manner, that nothing in that country was like the things in his own; for the houses and trees, and all things ran away as the vehicle came up to them; and when it gave a jostle, they gave a jump; which he noted as one of the most extraordinary things he had seen since he left Bagdad.

At last, Haddad-Ben-Ahab came to the foot of a lofty green mountain, with groves and jocund villages, which studded it, as it were, with gems and shining ornaments, and he said, "This must be the wall of the world, for surely nothing can exist on the other side of these hills ! but I will ascend them and look over, for I should like to tell my friends in Bagdad what is to be seen on the outside of the earth." Accordingly he ascended the green mountain, and he came to a thick forest of stubby trees : "This is surprising," said Haddad-Ben-Ahab, "but higher I will yet go." And he passed through that forest of trees and came to a steep moorland part of the hill, where no living thing could be seen, but a solitude without limit, and the living world all glittering at the foot of the mountain.

"This is a high place," said Haddad-Ben-Ahab, "but I will yet go higher," and he began to climb with his hands. After an upward journey of great toil he came to a frozen region, and the top of the wall of the world was still far above him. He was, however, none daunted by the distance, but boldly held on in the ascent, and at last he reached the top of the wall. But when he got there, instead of a region of fog and chaos, he only beheld another world much like our own, and he was greatly amazed, and exclaimed with a loud voice—"Will my friends in Bagdad believe this ?—but it is true, and I will so tell them." So he hastened down the mountain, and went with all the speed he could back to Bagdad ; saying, "Bagdad," and giving gold to every man he met, until he reached the kiosk of dreams, where his friends were smoking and looking at the gambols of the Tigris.

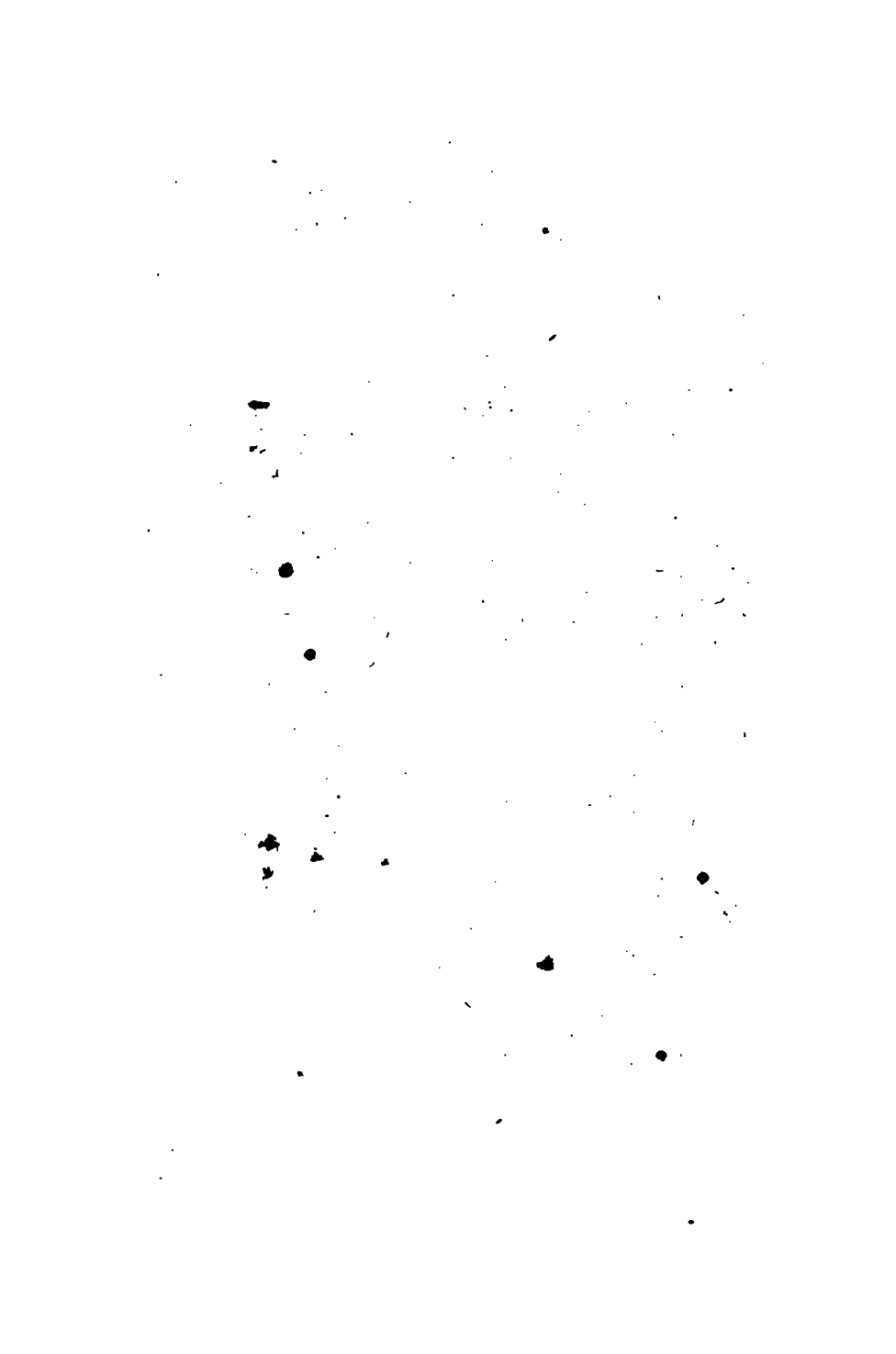
When the friends of Haddad-Ben-Ahab saw him approach, they respectively took their pipes from their mouths and held them in their left hands, while they pressed their bosoms with their right, and received him with a solemn salaam, for he had been long absent, and all they in the mean time had heard concerning him was only what Orooblis, the Armenian dier, on his return told them : namely, that he was gone to the wall of the world, which limits the travels of man. No wonder

then that they rejoiced with an exceeding gladness to see him return and take his place in the kiosk among them, as if he had never been a day's journey away from Bagdad.

They then questioned him about his adventures, and he faithfully related to them all the wonders which have been set forth in our account of the journey; upon which they declared he had made himself one of the sages of the earth.

Afterward they each made a feast, to which they invited all the philosophers in Bagdad, and Haddad-Ben-Ahab was placed in the seat of honour, and being courteously solicited, told them of his travels, and every one cried aloud, "God is great, and Mahomet is his prophet!"

When they had in this manner banqueted, Haddad-Ben-Ahab fell sick, and there was a great talk concerning the same. Some said he was very ill; others shook their heads and spoke not; but the world is full of envy and hard-heartedness, and those who were spiteful because of the renown which Haddad-Ben-Ahab, as a traveller who had visited the top of the wall of the world with so much courage, had acquired, jeered at his malady, saying he had been only feasted overmuch. Nevertheless Haddad-Ben-Ahab died; and never was such a funeral seen in all Bagdad, save that of the caliph Mahotd, commonly called the Magnificent. Such was the admiration in which the memory of the traveller was held, the poets made dirges on the occasion, and mournful songs were heard in the twilight from the windows of every harem. Nor did the generation of the time content itself with the ceremonies of lamentation: they caused a fountain to be erected, which they named the Fountain of Haddad-Ben-Ahab, the traveller; and when the slaves go to fetch water, they speak of the wonderful things he did, and how he was on the top of the wall of the world, and saw the outside of the earth; so that his memory lives for ever among them, as one of the greatest, the wisest, and the bravest of men.



THE GIPSY OF THE ABRUZZO.

BY TYRONE POWER.*

CHAPTER I.

THE hot south-east wind had prevailed all day, and cast gloom and languor over the lovely valley of Salamina—a spot worthy of having given birth to the amiable Naso; that immortal poet, whose glowing imagination has so truly painted those “charming agonies of love, whose misery delights.”

It was near to that spot still known to the peasantry as *La Bottega d'Ovidio*, that the young Donna Constanza stayed her eager palfrey to let him drink of the limpid stream of *Gli Fonte d'Amore*. Notwithstanding the sickening oppression of the malaria, now fast pervading the heated breeze, the flush of hope and happiness sat upon the maiden's brow, and the smile of youthful joy played around her pouting lips. While her horse sucked up the cooling draught, a voice from beneath called out in low but musical tones, “Gentil Donna,” two several times before she could recognise whence it proceeded.

“Gentil Donna,” said the voice, a third time, “fling a ducat on the margin of *Gli Fonte d'Amore*, and I'll read you your fortune.”

The lady now discerned the speaker where he lay stretched at full length beneath the thick olive that shaded one side of the spring.

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"This is no hour to have fortune read," replied the donna; "but here's a gold zechino for thy good wishes, for truly never did I need fortune more. Here, Andreas, rein up thy steed, and bear the coin to him."

"Touch it not, Messer Andreas," sharply cried the first speaker, addressing the waiting servitor; "'twill blister thy fingers else."

Andreas instinctively started from the proffered gold: the speaker laughed, and in a softened tone continued:—

"Fling it thou upon the flowery turf, made ever verdant by the waters of *Gli Fonte d'Amore*: fling it freely down, and thy love, lady, shall never know cross again."

A deep suffusion passed over the cheek of Constanza.

"The baron is in sight, donna," announced Andreas.

"Then let us ride on," she replied, as, with a look that seemed to say, I would hear more if occasion suited, she flung the coin towards the prophet; and, giving her spirited palfrey the rein, she galloped lightly on towards the castello.

"Your fortune is read, *molto beato*, and may your star never shine less brightly than at this hour," cried the man, springing up, and displaying the well-known equipment of the *Zingaro*—one of a race, half-bandit, half-gipsy, who were, at this period, thickly located about the wild mountain-track lying between Isernia and Popoli, and extending from the lake of Celano across the Maronne and Matesse. In his hand he bore a staff full nine feet long,—this was his only apparent weapon; from his neck hung a rudely-formed guitar, a long hair-net constrained his luxuriant black locks, and a large leafed hat lay back upon his shoulders, sustained by a narrow leather strap passed across his forehead. His nether man was clad in loose breeches of dark-yellow cotton, drawn tight below the knee; a greave-shaped leathern gaiter covered his leg nearly to the ankle, where it was met by the lacing of the rude sandal, which barely protected the sole of the foot. A

short closely-fitted jerkin of deer-skin, and a very large *capa* of coarse black cloth, completed the wardrobe of the very picturesque-looking youth, who, leaning on his staff, watched the receding figure of the beautiful Constanza. There was a yellowish tint in his complexion which would have given a sickly character to the countenance, but that it was more than counteracted by the lustrous brightness of his large black eyes, the redness of his lips, and a set of teeth, which, from their strength and whiteness, seemed formed for eternity. In figure he was about the middle height; his limbs light and long, denoting both strength and elasticity.

As the cortège of the baron drew near, the youth thus minutely described moved round the spring, and having picked from the turf the piece of gold, rapidly darted away; and by the aid of his pole readily clearing the many streams which intersected the meadow, made for the olive-grove, which covered one side of the steep hill leading to the castello. •

This was the day of the festival of the patron-saint of the monastery of the *Annunziata*, and in despite of the sirocco, the Baron de Mirialva had attended the ceremony in company with his niece. They had left the castle at daybreak, and were now returning from the monastery accompanied by some of the neighbouring nobility. It was on this day, in the church of the *Annunziata*, Constanza had recovered the smiles stolen from her brow, ever since the hour her uncle first announced the feud which separated her from Luigi Conradini, her long-affianced and heart-chosen lord. It was from the hand of a mendicant palmer to whom she tended alms, in the gloomy aisles of the church, she received the electric touch which imparted new life to her heart. It was from beneath that pilgrim's hood the glances shot which had kindled anew the fire of joy in her eyes; and it was to read the letter of love, hidden next her beating heart, whose lines, indeed, were to decide her fate, that she now spurred homeward so freely, heedless of the heat of sun or air.

The same day was far advanced, when the gipsy

stood close before the noble gate of the Castell de Mirialva, and while tuning his guitar, the wanderer's constant recommendation, disturbed the rest of the pampered porter who sat within its shade.

"Peace, and quit thy thrumming, rogue; thou cannot expect to steal aught here," growled the unmusical servitor; "what wouldst thou?"

"Something to eat, and somewhere to shelter me within these ample walls," replied the youth, sadly; "see you the threatening storm?"

"Diavolo, Zingaro!" rejoined the porter, "thou must have profited little by thy bringing up, if a coming storm or a night's lying in the air, with a gray stone pillow and a sky-coloured coverlid, can give thee much care."

"But, charity, good Signor Castellan!"

"Ay, ay, I am charitable to the real necessitoso, even to overflowing, and give abundantly to the worthy fathers of San Dominico. The convent of Monte Garigliano is hardly a league lower down; and if thou usest lightly those long legs of thine thou mayst yet cross the torrent before the mountain-waters find their way there. The holy fathers are excellent judges of the proper objects of compassion; go, tinkle thy guitar at their gate, and see if thy Zingaro ditties may win thee straw and a supper. Ho, ho!—Pah! that puff of malaria was the very breath of *Satan*; the true blast of the sirocco—away, rogue! Off from the portal, and let me close out thy ill-breathing, and thy master, the Devil's, together—it will not harm thee, 'tis thy native air; so good night, poveretto."

"The malaria be your only breathing, son of a bandog, until your bloated form be as black and as foul as the heart within it!" muttered the repulsed suppliant, as he turned from the closely-barred portal of the castello, and fixed his eyes upon the mighty masses of cloud now fast descending on every side, obscuring the close of day and creating a premature night, by colouring every object with their sickly saffron hue, only contrasted by the fiery glare of the vivid lightning, shot at intervals from their laden bosoms.

A few heavy raindrops, splashing upon the hard and thirsty soil, gave note of the coming storm, and promised a speedy termination to the sirocco that had blown all day. Though it was late, the birds, by a sudden quick and lively note, seemed to offer up thanks to the God of Nature for the relief about to be afforded them. The leaves of the olive, too, emitted a gentle rustling sound, as if eager to court the coming gale, that with cool breath began already to puff back the baleful blast, under whose withering influence all beneath the sky had seemed to droop and sicken.

"'Twill be a heavy fall, and soon too," muttered the gipsy, as, after a moment's observation of the heavens, he leaned upon his staff, and glanced about him; "and not a chance of shelter, except I crawl like a hound under some projection of these walls, upon which my curse should light, but that I watched the fair form of her who flung me this zechino, gallop lightly beneath them. Gold, humph! if I were in a city now this would win me supper and shelter from Christian or pagan; but of what use is it upon the mountain? A thousand such pieces would not bribe yon overladen cloud to bear its waters a league farther, and leave me in a dry skin. No! man alone knows its influence, and the ring of this tiny bit of yellow metal would thrill even to the *heart* of the churl who now bars me in the storm,—would even charm him to change hands and touch cup with the Zingaro. *Sformato!* if ever we meet on the mountain I'll read thee a true fortune; ay, and see to its fulfilment too, even as near to the end of thy life as may well be with safety."

The glance that accompanied this promise fully vouched for the sincerity of the speaker, who now pulled over his brows the large-leaved hat which had hitherto lain upon his shoulders, drew the hanging part of his hair-net tightly under his throat, and, folding his coarse capa closely about his person, seemed fully prepared to abide the pitiless pelting of the coming maestro, as with a quick and stealthy pace he turned the leeward angle of the casa.

CHAPTER II.

"T'WAS about the second hour of morning, the storm had done its errand, and was passed away, and the dome of heaven showed clear and unclouded. The cool breeze blew freshly, and formed a singular contrast to the dull suffocating wind that had prevailed during the preceding day. The deep shadows of the castello were flung far down the side of the hill upon which it was reared, and the only sound that broke on nature's repose was the distant roar of the swollen waters of the Pescara. A tall and stately cavalier was eagerly climbing the most precipitate part of the hill, over which hung a large projecting window; he halted as he arrived beneath it, and after gazing in silence for an instant, eagerly unwound his scarf, and waved it to and fro in the air.

"No," he at length murmured in a tone of bitter disappointment; "there is no hope; the light has long been extinguished, and she has despaired of my coming. I would I had plunged into the torrent that detained me; death would have been less painful than the eternal misery of hope delayed—could I yet apprise her that I am here without noise—but how? Stephano is with the horses, and I could as soon scale the Duomo as reach that cursed window. I would give a thousand ducats to see it fairly opened."

"A bargain, Signor Cavaliere," was at once whispered, in a clear and distinct though low tone, which seemed to rise close from beneath the signor's feet; he cast his eyes downwards, and observed, rolled up in a coin of the buttress, immediately under shelter of the window, a dark-looking mass, from out of which a pair of twinkling eyes were fixed intensely upon him.

"Who art thou?" he demanded, fiercely, "lying

coiled up there like the lynx of the Abruzzo? Come forth quickly, and show thy form and errand, or I'll unkenneel thee else with the point of my spada."

"Don't do that, signor," again whispered the voice; "don't do that, for when tickled, I have an ugly trick of laughing loud enough to be heard at a round league, and listeners *might* choose to seek out the joke sooner than you could be prepared to join in it."

"Come forth, sirrah knave, and fear not—only inform me what thou hast been doing in that lair, and why there at all?"

"Veramente, signor, I am here for lack of better shelter, and have been doing what I still had done but for your coming, sleeping sound—as the cat sleeps;—my ear is quick, signor, and my eye is quicker. I know you, *Luigi Conradini*, and could guess your present business here, ay, and could help you to do it into the bargain."

"And what are you that read me this riddle?"

"One who lives by riddles, a Zingaro," answered the speaker, rising nimbly to his full height, and shaking about him the folds of his capa.

"Ha! methinks I have seen thy face before, friend!"

"And I am sure I have seen yours, signor. Zingaro never yet forgot the face of friend or foe."

"Am I then to conclude myself recognised as the former, since you so readily proffer service?"

"Not more promptly, signor, than you extended it to me twelve months ago on this very day, in the wood of Venafrò, when the king's hounds turned off the trail of the deer to nose me, where I lay *perdu* under a tree, watching the chase, and the *chasseurs* were going to hang me up as a scarecrow for throwing them out—ay, and but for your prompt word had done it too. Now, signor, what can I do to repay the obligation? Fear not to trust me, I am yours to the death—for gratitude, like vengeance, should be *senza limite*."

"I fear me, Zingaro, that thy service, though honestly and freely proffered, may little avail me in this strait, unless thou hast wit to conjure me into yonder window; or

give warning in a whisper to her who no longer watches, that he whom she loves is here."

"Humph! both may be contrived, and without aid of the Devil, if you, signor, can afford to part with a portion of your dignity, and putting forth the native strength of your manhood, so become my bearer for a brief space."

"I do not rightly comprehend, but fear not my compliance; if thou canst but make it appear that by bearing thee I may enter yon chamber—but, pshaw! the thing has no likelihood; that window is a good twenty feet from the ground we tread on."

"Ha, ha! I have scaled a higher wall to rob a meal of flour from the Fornajo, and for the wealth and beauty that await thee!—*Animo*, Luigi Conradini! stand on this bench; so—why there's two feet less distance between thee and thy mistress already. Now take this pole, and drive the iron point into the opposite buttress with all thy might, and as high above head as may be: strike manfully for thy lady's love." The count raised his arm, and the point of the staff was buried between the huge stones.

"Well stricken," signor, cried the gipsy; "now lend me that silken scarf; elevate thine arms to the uttermost—so, now hold firm the pole, and stand fast, for my limbs might be periled if thine fail."

Agilely springing upon Conte Luigi's shoulders, the gipsy next stepped lightly upon the tough pole, which the lover with his vigorous arms bore above his head, pressing against the point which rested in the opposite wall; once at this elevation, he dexterously threw the scarf round one of the frightfully-carved heads which projected by way of ornament from the ends of the beams that supported the window, and seemed to grin defiance on all below; this done, to twist the two parts of the scarf together, and climb up by shifting his hands alternately one over the other, with the lightness and nimbleness of a marmot, was the work of a moment.

He tried the casement—it yielded to the touch, and

the long-desired haven stood open before the anxiously-watching lover of Constanza, who, making a sign to his assistant, quickly drew from his cloak a light but strong ladder of silken cordage, and flinging up one end to be hooked to the window's edge, fastened the other to the rude bench below, and promptly mounting entered the chamber.

"The thousand ducats are mine," whispered the gipsy-boy in the ear of the count.

"They will not be the moiety of thy reward," answered Conradini eagerly, "if I this night succeed in my hopes."

"*Basta*, signor," rejoined the successful climber; "let me first rub out the debt contracted in the forest of Venafrò, before we begin a new score."

"This apartment," continued the count, "is one of the suite occupied by Constanza; her dressing-room should be somewhere near the window on the right-hand. Ah! during our days of happiness, I knew well each turning in these apartments; and did the good old marchese, her father, still live, I need not now be seeking my affianced bride by night, and in darkness, as a thief seeks his prey."

"Why I fancy I feel more at home in the darkness than you do, signor," interrupted the gipsy, as they felt along the wall. "Ha! perchance here is the very door; a light within too!—by your leave, Messer Key; all is well—*Eccola*, signor; condescend to place your eye here and behold her whom you seek."

The count instinctively obeyed. It was indeed Constanza: she was still equipped as if for the saddle, except that she had thrown aside her hat and plume. Her beautiful countenance was suffused with the tears still falling upon an open letter that lay upon the table before her, and with whose contents she was intensely occupied. A half-uttered exclamation from the count reached her ear; she listened with doubting eagerness—a low tap was next heard on the door, and "*Constanza*" was softly whispered in those tones in which none ever breathed her name, save only one. "She

started to her feet, and gazed timidly around, passing her hand across her forehead. The next moment she had flung wide the chamber-door, and the swart form of the Zingaro stood before her! She saw no more; a wild piercing scream burst from her lips, and covering her face with her hands, she sank senseless into the arms of her betrothed husband, Luigi Conradini.

"*Diavolo!* signor, was it your looks or mine that so terrified the donna?"

"We are lost!" exclaimed the count, "lost beyond hope; her loud scream must have alarmed the household, and my life will be the sacrifice to her guardian uncle's anger and revenge."

"Nay, then," cried his companion, "resign thy senseless prize, and let us two fly; 'tis ill arguing with an angry guardian on his own ground."

"Not so, but do thou leave me, good fellow! take this purse and fly; for myself, I will abide the worst, and die, rather than again be separated from her for whom alone I wish to live."

A distant noise, as if of approaching footsteps, was now heard. The Zingaro paused for a moment, as he quietly put aside the proffered gold; he cast his eyes on the senseless form of Constanza, over which the count fondly hung; then, as if suddenly having resolved and decided on his course, he exclaimed, taking the hand of the lady—

"I this day read you a fair fortune, donna, and it must be fulfilled; take up your mistress, signor, and bear her down the ladder."

"'Tis useless, worthy fellow: already I hear the sound of advancing feet at the end of the corridor; we should be pursued and seized ere I could bear this dear burthen half-way down the hill to where my good horses wait."

"You shall not be pursued. I will remain behind, will close down the window, lead them on a wrong scent, and so win you ample time—away, come!"

"How! *you* remain! but your life will—"

"I know, I know, signor; my neck will be put in some jeopardy, but that is an every-day venture—if I 'scape, so—if not, at worst, hanging is the natural death of our race, and I am already some twelve months older than I should have been but for your interference—so I owe you a death. Ha! they are getting impatient without; so courage, signor, the fresh air revives her already—there, throw your cloak round her head; let her not again get sight of my face to terrify her anew. Ha, ha, ha! I never judged before it was so forbidding to the sex."

A violent hammering was now heard on the outer door of the corridor, together with the baron's voice ordering it to be broken down. The count and his lovely prize were by this time at the foot of the ladder—he looked back to the gipsy, and urged him to descend.

"Down with thee, my brave lad, and try thy fortune with us!"

"You were lost if I did that," answered the youth, coolly. "Adieu, Luigi Conradini. Tell the donna 'twas I who yesterday read her fortune by the waters *Gli Fonti d'Amore*. And hark! should the aged of our race ever cross your path, fling a coin in their way for my sake, and confess that the gratitude of lo Zingaro is *senza limite*."

He closed the window with the last word, and softly entering the chamber of Constanza, had just time to secure the lock, when the outer door was burst open, and the baron appeared, surrounded by a crowd of half-dressed domestics, who all eagerly pressed forward, alarmed at the thought of their young lady's danger.

"All here is quiet," said the baron, after looking about him for a moment; "are you sure it was the Donna Constanza's voice you heard, calling for help?"

"*Per certo*, signor," answered a domestic, "and when first I listened at the outer door, I heard more than one voice whispering in this very room."

"And I," said another, "heard the most fearful scream."

"Scream! several screams you mean, or Heaven mend your hearing," added a third.

"Peace, knaves!" said the baron, as he knocked at his niece's chamber. All were silent, but no answer was returned; repeating his summons in a louder key, he next called upon her within but to assure him of her safety: still echo was his only reply. "The girl has not surely been mad enough to attempt her life, for love of the foolish boy to whom her father in his dotage betrothed her? Here, Jocopec, try thy hammer on this door."

This command was immediately followed by a storm of blows upon the door, under which, after a gallant resistance, the stout cedar at length gave way, and the hallowed sanctuary of beauty lay open to the profanation of the vulgar gaze.

The domestics hung back, from a mingled feeling of respect and apprehension, and the baron alone entered the chamber. All within bore testimony to the taste and elegance of the inhabitant, but showed not any sign of violence or even discomposure. Upon the table stood an extinguished taper, and near it lay the guitar and music, last touched by the fair hand of Constanza. A velvet curtain hung before the recess in which stood her couch; this was lowered, and as the baron gently drew it aside he perceived the bed was occupied.

"This," he cried, in astonishment, "is most strange, surely the wilful girl is moonstruck; Constanza, answer me! Constanza!" he repeated, striking the coverlid violently with his hand. "Nay, this foolery is too much for patience; therefore, bring lights here, knaves. Fair lady, by your leave; for your face I will see, and your voice I will hear, ere I sleep again."

"You must ride hard, or watch long, then, *grandissimo*," cried the occupant, rising up as the baron laid his hand upon the bed. The attendants rolled back upon each other in affright; even the stout Mirialva recoiled, as if he had touched a torpedo.

Well might the nerves of the Donna Constanza quail beneath the glance of the Zingaro as he now appeared.

His capa was discoloured by the red soil he had so long lain upon; his long elfin locks, escaped from their thralldom during the storm, hung in wild disorder about his face, while his eyes, full of the excitement that stirred within him, blazed with an almost unearthly brightness.

"Devil!" exclaimed the baron, after recovering from the surprise of this most unexpected vision, "what has led thy fiend-like carcass to so unfitting a resting-place?"

"The stars," was the prompt reply, uttered with an oracular wave of the hand; "the stars, which govern and decide our destinies, and with whose mighty influence it were as vain to contend as to puff a feather against the raging blast of the maestro, or stay the determined will of woman's first love."

"Dog of a cursed breed! thou shalt find it was an evil star led thee to thrust thy handiwork between me and my will! Where is my niece? Speak, hast thou murdered her?"

"The blood of woman never yet followed blow of mine; nor ever did the lust of gold lead me to thrust my will between her and her heart's choice."

"Peace, slave! Answer thou my questioning, and utter word more or less than to that end, and I'll have thy saucy tongue torn from its foul root. Thou canst tell the course she has taken?"

"Ay, if you once put me upon her track, my eye is keen enough to distinguish the light foot of a lady from the spur of the lynx."

"Who is her companion?"

"At this minute it would be wild to swear that; some time has passed since I last saw her, and women at the best are variable in their fancies."

"Holy Mother! the unblest churl juggles with my patience. Ho, there! drag this foul carrion from out the bed; strip the deer's hide from his back, and lash him till he learn straight speech."

On the gipsy's being hauled from the couch, and placed upright on the floor, his limbs apparently re-

fused their wonted service, and he at once sunk down like a thing wholly bereft of bone and muscle; this dogged and passive resistance being the only opposition he thought fit to offer, he was quickly raised upon the shoulders of four stout fellows, and borne to the hall; where, still refusing to stand, his jerkin was slashed with knives from his back, and with such little care, that blood was seen to follow more than one blade. In this work, Jocoque, the surly porter, was conspicuously officious.

"We'll make it more difficult for you to stand ere we're done dealing on your swart hide!" whispered the fellow, as he assisted in dragging the prisoner's arms round the marble pillar they were made to embrace. When bound, with the upper part of his body exposed and naked for the lash, Jocoque approached him, armed with a heavy whip. "I owe thee my service, son of Satan," he whispered in his victim's ear. "What, thou wouldst have tricked me into taking thee under shelter of the castello, to cut our throats, as well as spirit away my young lady, eh! But for once thou hadst to deal with thy master."

"Thou didst deal wisely in barring me out, truly, *spietato!*" replied the gipsy, with a bitter smile of triumph.

"Lay on, and spare not!" impatiently cried the baron; and he seated himself to see the cruel order fully carried into effect.

The stalwart arm of the ruffian porter plied his instrument of torture with such coolness and skill that a streak of red marked the course of every lash. With eyes and teeth firmly compressed, and without suffering a groan to escape him, the wretched youth bore for awhile his punishment; even the fiercely-exerted strength of his torturer began to flag, when turning his eyes towards the baron, the sufferer cried, "Hold!" At a sign the next blow was suspended.

"What, thou hast found thy tongue?" demanded Mirialva.

"And how am I to be benefited by using it according to your will?"

"Thou shalt have a couch of straw, and bread and water, till to-morrow; then a strong cord and a fair spring from the top of the castle-gate."

"Hum! fair offers and tempting! what if I still keep silence?"

"Thou shalt be now flogged as near to thy death as may be done on this holy Sabbath morn," sternly replied Mirialva; "and on the morrow shall await thee a like punishment, to be continued until thy dark spirit be dismissed to the hell it sprung from!"

"Umph, unbind me!" calmly said the gipsy. "I choose straw and a supper, the long cord and the free spring; but, hold! you will not, after squeezing me dry, put me again under lash?"

"I have promised thee respite until Monday morn; wilt thou not take the given word of a *Roman baron*?"

"As readily as you would take Zingaro *oath*, sworn on the rood! Touch with your lips the cross of your dagger, and on it swear to keep faith with me, or my lips are again sealed, and for ever!"

"Unbelieving miscreant!" exclaimed the baron, starting in rage from his seat; "I am well-enough minded to put thy stoutness to the proof."

Prudence, however, and the desire of a nobler victim for revenge overruled this momentary burst of passion. Making, therefore, the prescribed oath, he again took his seat.

"A draught of water to moisten my parched throat, and my cloak to cover over my shame, and then your questions, signor, I am ready to answer."

Water was brought, and the capa thrown upon his lacerated shoulders. He calmly drew his cloak about him, and bowed slightly, in token of being prepared; the baron began:—

"Who was the contriver and companion of my niece's flight?"

"The husband chosen by her father, the Count Luigi Conradini."

"Ha! is it so? And how gained he access to her chamber?"

"That service I contrived for him."

The baron cast a glance of deathful import on the unflinching speaker, then went on.

"Knowest thou where they now be?"

"With willing minds, sharp spurs, and stout steeds, they may now be wellnigh across the Pettorano."

"Then they are bound for Naples?"

"For Naples."

"Now art thou a lying knave; for mortal man dare not venture to cross the Pescara after the rain of last night."

"The Count Luigi had already crossed it, though somewhat later than he had looked to do; a delay that had wellnigh lost him his fair prize."

"May its swollen waters 'whelm them both, and for ever!" cried the baron, as he started up and rapidly paced the hall. "Ho, there! to horse, some of you; hasten to the river, and see if it be yet fordable; look close for the new track of horses, and ride upon the spur; a *thousand ducats* to him who brings back my niece, or can show me a blade died with the heart's blood of Luigi Conradini. Take hence that hound, bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the tapestried chamber at the extremity of my gallery; let him have bread and water, and straw to lie on. If thy story be true, and the torrent fordable, I will keep faith with thee, and on the morrow thou shalt have a strong cord, and die the death of thy fathers; but if thou hast spoken a lie, thou shalt be whipped until thy false heart be laid bare to the sun, whose beams shall wither it within thee."

"By the *star* that rules me, I have spoken truly, Baron Mirialva."

The clatter of the departing horsemen was now heard as they hastily spurred over the paved court.

"Ha, ha, ha! they must ride and spare not, who seek to win back time past, or true lovers flown," continued the Zingaro, as he was led from the hall to his prison-chamber.

During the foregoing events, Time had held on his

unchanging, unchangeable course ; and as the prisoner was thrust into his last earthly lodging, he was saluted by the first burst of a bright morning sun, darting its many-coloured rays through the stained glass of a narrow window, placed high overhead, and indeed the only means of supplying with either light or air this gloomy chamber.

The Zingaro gazed for a moment at the cheerful light, half-shading his brow with his hand ; then, turning to his guards, he requested that they would place him within the influence of its beams.

"Ay, to be sure," was the reply : "Nicola, toss down that straw here ; the poor devil wants to sun himself."

"He's no judge of astronomy, then," answered the bearer of straw, "or he'd have known that the rays of the morning sun will rest but a short space where they now fall : no, no, poor ignorant, if thou wouldst have the sun for company, I'll put thy straw in yonder nook, where he will sleep awhile after midday."

"Put it down here," said the Zingaro, adhering to the same spot ; "'tis not his noonbeam I would watch, for that I shall never see again ; no, 'tis his earliest light on the morrow I would fain give greeting to, that I may know how near is the hour of my end as I watch my last sun rise."

"O, that's it," replied the astronomer ; "then even so be it—have thy bed where thou wilt. But methinks thine is an odd fancy ; now I, though naturally of an inquiring turn, am no way curious about seeing my last sun rise, and don't care, in troth, if I never see it at all, so I live the longer—but every man to his humour : so there. But, by your leave, we must bind your hands and legs, for you Zingari are but slippery subjects ; however, with this little precaution, and without outlet, except for a weasel, through yon window, I think thou mayst be trusted. Now thou'rt fast, here's thy bread and water ; at nightfall I'll not fail to bring thee a fresh supply ; and, unless thou have stomach for a right early breakfast, thy turn of eating may be then considered

pretty well served for this world. "Tisn't every man that's doomed to the dog's death that meets such gentle fare or soft lodging; but a bargain's a bargain, and thou'lt find the baron a man of his word; so, till night, rest in peace, honest pagan. Come, comrades, leave the Zingaro to his repose; there's no fear of his being troubled with nightmare, for he wont lie much on his back, I guess—ha, ha, ha!"

Amid the loud laughter this jest created, the door was firmly secured without, and the subject of this brutal mirth was left alone.

The tapestried chamber was a large square apartment, never used but for one melancholy service,—that of guarding the mortal remains of the lords of Mirialva during their brief passage from the death-bed to the tomb.

In this chamber was prepared the last display of earthly vanity attendant upon departed greatness; here was laid out in all the impotence of lifeless clay the once mighty lord of a thousand vassals. The room was, in conformity with its sad purpose, hung round with black tapestry, that had once, no doubt, been of exquisite workmanship; but, from age and neglect, it now was torn in many places, and in others hung loose from the wall. With the exception of the high window described above, a stout oaken door, leading into a gallery belonging to the baron's apartments, was the only outlet; a more secure or melancholy prison, therefore, could not easily have been imagined; a like conviction appeared to enter on the prisoner's mind, for after a keen and searching glance around him, which, as he gazed on his own fettered limbs, settled at length into a look of fixed despair—

"The slaves," he exclaimed, "have bound my hands so straitly, that the food they have thrown me is useless, for nor hand nor foot can I stir. The hypocrites would not hang on their Sabbath, but think it no sin to scourge and starve. But 'tis no matter, I need not much strength to hang, and there is, I fancy, no hope of respite or escape; so good day, fair sun! and welcome be thy first ray to-morrow!"

So saying, the captive turned himself composedly upon his straw, and enjoyed, hungry and lacerated as he was, a sounder sleep than visited the pillow of "thrice-driven down," pressed by the proud baron who thirsted for his blood.

Carlette Mirialva was the younger brother of the late marchese, and the inheritor of his titles and estates: early plunged in dissipation and overwhelmed with debt, the latter he had anticipated long before his brother's death, and consequently, when this event took place, he had little to avail himself of but the empty title. Before the death of the marchese every thing had been arranged between him and the father of Conradini for the marriage of their children; it was postponed only by the illness of the marchese, and with his dying-breath he enjoined the fulfilment of his pledge upon his brother. This, however, would have ill suited the views of the needy gamester. The Castell di Mirialva and the property in the Abruzzo formed the inheritance of Constanza in right of her mother; and this must have been necessarily given up to her husband upon her marriage, leaving the proud baron houseless, or compelling him to avow his folly, and rest dependent on his niece's bounty, until time should pay his debts, and again make him master of his own ample domains. His first act, therefore, on his brother's death was to refuse his consent to the fulfilment of the marriage contract, unless it were stipulated that he should be left master of this domain for so many years. Luigi and Constanza were too far gone in love not to have agreed readily to his wishes; but not so the elder Conradini; he, with the prudence attendant on his age, and the indignation natural to a high mind, replied by spurning the unworthy proposal in no measured terms. An open and violent rupture was the immediate consequence, which threatened, in the end, to sunder the lovers for ever; for Constanza was but seventeen, and the laws left her at her uncle's disposal until she should attain the age of three-and-twenty, a century in true love's calendar. Many months had elapsed since

This disagreement, and numerous were the suitors introduced by the baron for his own purposes, and rejected by Constanza with a firmness well-worthy her name.

At length the festival of the Annunziata enabled Conradini, in the disguise of a mendicant palmer, to communicate to her his wishes, and his plans for their execution; and so well did he describe, in his letter, the present misery of separation, and the risks he had run in vain to see or communicate with her; and in such bright colours did he contrast the happiness and security awaiting them in flight, and in the fulfilment of a marriage already plighted before Heaven and sanctified in their hearts, that Constanza, on that very night, heedless of the storm which raged without, had frankly obeyed the directions of her lover, and like another Hero, placed a light in her turret window, at once to be the guide to his steps, and the token of her own readiness to follow them.

It has been already told how the swollen Pescara detained her eager deliverer, until, mortified and wearied, she, two hours after midnight, withdrew her beacon, and abandoned herself to grief. Grief soon changed to joy by the embrace of her long-banished Luigi.

This retrospective detail will at once explain the baron's cause for rage, and his eager thirst for vengeance, not only on Conradini, but on the humbler agent of his loss, the luckless Zingaro, whom no laws of the time either acknowledged or protected. His wretched race were left, like the wild animals of the rude country they inhabited, to roam at large through the desert, and like them too were liable to be hunted to the death by any noble sportsman who might choose, at his own proper peril, to follow such diversion.

Anxiously did the Baron di Mirialva count each minute of that Sabbath morn, that holy Sabbath, ordained as a day of repose, both from the toils and passions of frail nature—a day wisely sanctified and set apart for reflection and repentance. But far otherwise were employed the thoughts of Mirialva; intensely did he listen to each sound, eager to catch the footfall of

returning horse ; constantly were his strained eyes fixed on the approach from the banks of the Pescara, while his heart was consuming within him, fired by the demons Avarice, Anger, and Revenge.

A horseman at length appeared, whose hard-spurred, jaded steed could hardly bear its rider up the steep. The baron flew to the gate to meet him—with the hellish hope in his heart, and the wish on his lip, he demanded, “ Well, have they been tracked ? have you overtaken the runagates ? is *he* dead ? Say yes, and boldly claim the promised thousand ducats, and more, thy lord’s eternal favour.”

The vassal hung his head in silence. One by one the wearied riders returned with no better success, till at last but one remained out on whom to rest a hope. But the baron knew well the nature of the hound that still hung upon the track, and while Jocopec returned not, he did not entirely abandon his demon-like hope. Right well this worthy servant merited the confidence of such a master ; patient, wearyless, and true to the scent of blood, as the hound of whose savage nature he so largely partook, he, though outstripped and baffled, still hunted on, a dogged instinct his guide, and the promised gold his spur.

CHAPTER III.

THE shades of evening had once more fallen upon the valleys of the Abruzzo before the Zingaro was re-awakened to a sense of pain and hunger. As he slowly turned upon his straw, he cast his eyes upwards on the now almost darkened window ; suddenly a gleam of wild and unrestrained joy lighted up his pallid and worn features—his sight became riveted to the object, as he cried aloud—

“ ’Tis there ! ’tis there ! It shines bright and daz-
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zingly upon me, unclouded and serene, the star of my birth and the guide of our race. I saw it twinkling thus in my past dream of freedom. Hail to thee, herald of hope! Thou didst shine thus lightly upon me, as, but now, in sleep, I sat again by our mountain-stream with Zea by my side; and once more listened to her sweet voice, as it rose in thy praise, attuned to the guitar she best loves to hear! Thou art still above me, shining star, and I am not forsaken! Thou art still unclouded, and I will not despair, for never wouldst thou rise so brightly at eve, were a son of thy people to die the cruel death ere thy setting."

With the spirit of new-born hope did the captive now await the approach of his jailer, as he heard the massy bolts withdrawn; for, true to his promise, Nicola again stood beside him, bearing a fresh allowance of bread and water.

"Why, how's this," said the man, observing the former supply still remaining; "thy food and drink untouched? Mass, but thou art somewhat dainty in thy fare, or hast a marvellous gift of long fasting. Why hast thou not broken bread, Zingaro? thy hanging to-morrow will be none the more agreeable, because thou art some pounds the lighter; why, man, thou'lt be as hard to die as a cat; eat and drink, and prepare for thy ending as like a good Christian as one of thy doomed breed can."

"How can I do either?" bitterly replied the prisoner; "your food is left but as a mockery, when my lips might parch for a drop of water, ere I, thus tightly bound, could moisten them. What fear you, that you thus pinion me? Escape were impossible, unless I had wings like a bird, and no more bulk than a shadow; for otherwise I could neither reach, nor pass out of yonder window."

"Why, there is some reason in that," rejoined the jailer, glancing round; "and though the baron ordered thee to be bound, he also intended thou shouldst eat, or else he had ne'er promised thee food—so, by our Lady, I'll strain my warranty and loose thy cords a

trifle—and more, thou shalt have the bottom of my wine flask to give a whet to thy appetite.

“There! with two foot between hand and hand, a man may do much, with a hungry stomach and good will—thou need’st not thy feet to help thy feeding, so we’ll let them be; and if they feel somewhat tight-laced, why console thee, ’tis but a few hours, and then thou mayst kick away with them like an unbroken colt—ha, ha, ha! Nay, never lower at my joke, man—thou relishest the smack of the wine though, ha? Well, finish it then, and welcome, for now we’re alone, between thee and me and the wall, I owe thee no ill-will for helping the Lady Constanza to the man she liked, and am not sorry the young birds have shown them such strong wing.”

“The horsemen have then returned?” demanded the Zingaro.

“Ay, come back, empty handed; all but one, and he’ll get little but wrung withers and dirty boots for his ride, I guess.”

“Who is he that still hangs on the track of his lord’s daughter?”

“Who but Jocopec, the porter,” said Nicola; “and as for hanging, by the mass, for the gold that’s promised, he’d hang a slip-knot round the neck of the brother that twinned at birth with him.”

While the jailer thus indulged his gossiping propensity, the Zingaro eagerly continued to eat and drink; and as from time to time his dark eye flashed upwards, it would kindle with hope revived, and reveal a thousand thick-coming fancies of liberty and vengeance. In a few moments Nicola rose to depart.

“Adieu till morn, Zingaro,” he said; “eat thy last supper, and sleep soundly; fear not to be awakened in hanging time—ha, ha, ha! Nay, no anger at my jest! thou wouldst like well enough to list to it this time to-morrow.”

The door again closed; the bolts again jarred on the ear; and the Zingaro was once more alone. But he was no longer the inanimate log that for so many hours had lain without exhibiting one sign of life or motion;

but alert, active, and stirring, with a glance like the hawk, and with vigour and ingenuity equal to his will.

First, with the assistance of his teeth he managed to spread before him his capa, and then, from a secret pouch within its folds he drew forth the hidden implements for procuring light, which ever formed a part of his *matériel*—quickly and skilfully using his partially freed hands, he succeeded in the first part of his attempt; when holding over the light the bonds which confined his wrists, he sat, partially feeding the flame, until the stout cords gave way. His hands thus free, he waved them in triumph and thanksgiving towards the star still shining brightly upon him; and in an incredibly short space of time he, by similar process, freed his feet from bondage, though not without some suffering from the flames. As the last turn of the lashing was unwound, he sprung from the floor, and attempted to stand erect, but the cramped trembling joints failed to support him, and he fell back powerless upon his straw; by degrees, however, he restored the circulation to his benumbed and sore-scorched limbs, until they once more became capable of their wonted exertion.

As the night advanced he boldly proceeded in his plan. First, tearing down a large portion of the tapestry, he passed his hands along the walls of his prison; on three sides his views were opposed by solid stone; the fourth he discovered, with confirmed hope, to be of stout wainscot. But whither did the next room beyond lead to? or by whom might it now be occupied? Could nature support the dense smoke that must attend his attempt to burn a passage through here, for the escape of which smoke not an outlet existed, excepting the window high overhead, any effort to break which would alarm the yet wakeful inhabitants of the castell, before his purpose could be half-effected. Then came the more horrid suggestion, might he not, ere the stout oak gave way before the flames, himself perish miserably, tortured by a vain dream of freedom, while his limbs withered within the folds of the terrible agent whose aid he was about to invoke. These, and a thousand

other fearful imaginings, swept through the prisoner's mind, as he busily collected a portion of his straw, together with some of the dry and mouldering tapestry, so as to form a heap of combustibles immediately beneath the wainscot.

Thus prepared, ere he applied the light, he again fixed his eyes upon the window, as if he expected from the star of his wild faith some evident and visible sign to direct him. He now looked in vain; the star shone no longer upon him. For a moment a shade of doubt clouded his brow, ere he interpreted this change: then bending low his head he cried—

“Thou art gone: thou wilt no longer let thy free rays linger within these thrice-accursed walls of stone—thou art gone, to light up the dark mountain and the silver stream, and thou callest on thy son to follow thy free course, or die;—ever-blessed star of my fathers, be thou obeyed!”

As he concluded, he again bowed low his head with a solemn earnestness of voice and manner, that fully bespoke his ardent faith in the strange creed he held.

He touched with his light a selected portion of the straw, and the flame rose fiercely against the sturdy wainscot, that seemed in its strength to defy the puny effort.

The Zingaro patiently sat crouching upon his hams, and from time to time carefully fed the slow fire, which, by degrees, gave certain evidence of its subtle and insidious power upon the surface of the blistering, blackened oak.

A little while longer, and the wainscot began itself to assist in its own destruction: the bluish flame that at first had but flickered for a moment, unsteadily and by fits upon its surface, seemed all at once to fix its hold with a tenacity not to be again shook off, and in a moment after, it rushed in fierce triumph over the hissing wood.

The smoke became dense, even to suffocation: nevertheless, stretched at full length, with his face close to the floor, the Zingaro continued for a long time to

endure this suffering, as he carefully fed and directed the flames, which, to his hopes, gave promise of freedom; but at length the heat and smoke combined might no longer be borne with life. Thus made reckless of the consequences, he suddenly started up, and seizing the vessel which contained his supply of water, he aimed it against the lofty window; the immediate shiver of falling glass which followed bespoke the success of his effort, while the huge mass of smoke, lifting itself quickly upwards, left the floor comparatively free for breathing.

The dangerous consequences which had made him so long defer this movement, as he foresaw, almost immediately followed. First was heard the buzz of many mingled voices, gathering in the court below, to mark the thick smoke as it rolled through the broken window; then followed an eager cry for the keys of the tapestried chamber. Not an instant was to be lost; and no sooner did the prisoner hear these sounds, than gathering together the stout cords which had bound his feet and hands, he with their aid firmly secured the door inside; a work barely accomplished before he heard the quick tread of feet, and the hasty withdrawing of bolts; the heavy lock next turned in its wards, and an attempt was made to thrust open the door.

"Santa Maria! 'tis fast within!" cried a voice the prisoner recognised for Nicola's: "'tis the body of the poor Zingaro, doubtless, that has fallen against it—push stoutly, together, lads"—but the door again withstood their united efforts. "Get axe and hammer quickly, some of you," continued Nicola; "the fire is certainly here; 'twas never a spark from my lamp surely when I took the lad his supper. Ring out the great bell; call up my lord, the baron, or he will be burned in his bed else, like the poor *heathen* within, whose flesh I can plainly hear sputtering like chestnuts a-roasting."

A succession of sturdy blows rebounded from the entrance, and immediately the Zingaro tried with his foot to force the crackling wainscot, but it refused to

give way. How to gain more time? already the door was rent from its hinges and had been down, but that the assailants had retreated from the first burst of smoke, calling loudly for water.

The Zingaro saw at once that now or never came the decisive moment—gathering therefore the remainder of his straw and other fuel, he quickly heaped it before the forced door, and just as this was falling inwards, he flung a blazing mass upon the ready pile—a wall of fire in an instant supplied the place of the barrier just beaten down, and the terrified water-bearers ran from the spot, with cries of horror, as they caught a glimpse of the dark form beyond, which appeared to move calmly and untouched amid the blaze.

In a few moments the fallen door began to add fresh fuel to the fire; the great bell, too, rung out the awful sound of flame. Drunk with the smoke, and maddened with the pain of his half-burned hands, the Zingaro also prepared for his last desperate effort. He covered his head and shoulders with thickened folds of his capa, retired a few paces from the now smouldering wainscot, then, rousing his whole force for the attempt he rushed forward and dashed himself sideways against it. The half-burned boards burst before his weight, and, whelmed amid the blazing ruin, he rolled into the next apartment.

Shaking the burning embers from about him, he hurried across the unoccupied and unfurnished room, and opening the door, entered the passage beyond. On the instant a voice arrested his step:

“Who art thou?” demanded a man, advancing hastily from an adjoining door, holding high a lamp,—“why am I thus rudely aroused, and whence this peal of wild alarm?” The Zingaro turned upon the inquirer, and the light flashed upon his face. Had the master-fiend himself, clothed in all his terrors, met Mirialva’s sight—for he was the speaker—he could not have looked more dismayed than he now did, as he gazed upon his late prisoner, blackened with smoke, and with garments glowing from the sparks of fire which still clung to them.

"What demon art *thou*?" again demanded the baron, as he stepped back towards the nearly closed door of the room just left by his sentenced prisoner, "speak!"

Demoniac indeed was the look the gipsy cast upon his proud foe, as with a voice of thunder he shouted,

"*Lo Zingaro!*" Then bounding forward with a tiger-spring he dashed the bewildered baron into the apartment already half-filled with flames, and closing the door, quickly drew the bolts. He then turned into Mirialva's now vacant bedchamber, tore from the sumptuous couch and windows the silken cords which draped the curtains, and by their aid descended with speed and safety into the private garden of the castello.

Already flames were bursting from the closely barred windows of the room which held the wretched Mirialva. The Zingaro paused for a moment and looked upwards—a wild scream for "help!" burst upon his ear—a roar of curses and loud laughter followed. This last was the domestics in the gallery, who thus mocked what they took for the cries of the suffering Zingaro. A yet wilder and more piercing cry of agony again filled the air—and again was it echoed by fresh yells of savage mockery.

"Ha!" exclaimed the listener, "these shrieks should have been *mine*, and such the laughter that would have greeted *my* agonies! Ha, ha, ha! roar on, ye accursed; let your shouts of joy ring in the ears of your unheeded, burning iord: and may the fiends of Eblis redouble your cries, as his black soul is hurled amid their eternal fires!"

Dashing the hot sweat from his scathed brow, the gipsy made for the olive-grove, and with great difficulty held his way, until, exhausted, he sunk upon the welcome margin of the calm waters of *Gli Fonti D'Amore*.

CHAPTER IV.

ON a gentle eminence, at the foot of the Vomero, stood the palace of the Conradini, in the midst of luxuriant vineyards, and immediately encircled by a private garden of some extent, beautifully laid out, and evincing a more careful superintendence than is usually bestowed in Italy upon such preserves. For in this favoured climate nature has showered so generally on every verdant spot her beauties of tree and flower, that the wealthy have little inducement to enclose for private luxury exotics which may be enjoyed by the meanest serf who cultivates his native fields.

To the palace of his ancestors, the Conte Luigi had at once borne his youthful bride, for such he had legally made her. Fast as the church could bind them, they were now one; and although his father would not become a party to an unworthy bargain to obtain a daughter-in-law, he was not in his heart sorry to find that the happiness of his son was secured without such a compromise; and although Luigi's attempt would, had it been known to him, have been met by his fixed opposition, the die being fairly cast, he received his son with forgiveness, and his new-made daughter with a cordial welcome and a father's blessing.

Letters were immediately despatched to the Baron di Mirialva, to suggest to him the necessity of fulfilling the contract entered into by his deceased brother, or otherwise preparing to abide the king's judgment and probable displeasure; for to the foot of the throne, immediately upon a refusal, Conradini resolved to bear the claims of his son, and appeal to the justice of his sovereign.

The messenger despatched with the above demand had now been absent the full time necessary for his

journey, and hourly expecting his arrival, the Conte Luigi and his bride sat beneath a veranda that commanded an ample view of the lovely bay.

The moon was slowly rising in her fullest majesty, and had already silvered with her light the edges of the lofty cliffs, rising high over the picturesque Castel d'Ovo, which was itself lost in their deep shadows. The classic isles beyond just showed in the extreme distance like globes of silver floating on the dark bosom of the glassy sea. Not far removed might be heard the cries of the fishermen, as they hauled their boats above the reach of the waters, accompanied by the hoarse low roar of the surf, rolling in round the long-continued line of beach. Nearer the palace all was thrown into deep shadow by the stately silver pines, which, planted in thick rows, covered it in front, like a noble guard, while many clumps of sweetly-scented shrubs were made to encroach to within a few paces of the window where sat the lovers.

Constanza listened with a charmed ear to her lord, as he pointed out the various beauties of the scene, with all the enthusiasm of a poet, and with the love of a patriot for his native Naples.

"But the night air is freshening, and you, love, must be wearied with my legends of the past glories of Naples, and of imperial Capri and its horrors. They are twice dear to me, for they are associated with my every childish joy and sorrow. They first stole on my wondering eager ears, in all the exaggerated detail of my good old nurse, and were, in after-days, made the reward of well-doing, as on this very spot they were described in the grandeur of simple history, made still more noble by the glowing eloquence of my aged preceptor, the excellent Carlo Mattei. Come, we will enter the apartment—see, the lamps are already lighted: come, and you shall shame my tediousness by playing one of those wild mountain-airs we have so often sung together, as we sauntered through your sweet valley of Salmona."

"Ah!" said Constanza, with a sigh, as the recollec-

tion of her own birthplace rose fresh upon her memory, "loved valley ! shall I ever again behold thee ? ever again wander by those clear waters, where I have so often bounded on the light foot of childhood ?"

"And in the young days of our love, too," whispered Luigi. "Oh, fear not, dearest ; your uncle will scarce dare abide the sovereign's command, which he knows must follow my father's appeal. He will yield to strong necessity, doubt not ; and soon again shall you sit in the antique hall of your castello, and sing to me the country's gentle songs in praise of love's own poet and Salmona's pride."

Together they now entered the apartment, throwing wide the casement, which opened to the ground. Constanza seated herself opposite to it, and in a tone of anxious melancholy, continued :—

"I know not, my Luigi, what so oppresses me, but my heart is ever and anon seized with a throbbing which threatens even to burst it : my mind, too, has been all this day filled with dismal fancies."

"What can chill thee thus ?" answered the conte, as he fondly pressed with his lips her marble brow. "Thou art happy, my own Constanza ?"

Beaming with tenderness, she fixed her gazelle-like eyes upon her lord, as she replied—

"Happy ! Luigi, am I not with thee ? Am I not thine own Constanza ? But would that this tardy courier were returned ; you know not the fierce nature of Carlette di Mirialva. When I reflect on his hatred, on his daring, on his vengeance—oh ! Luigi, can I speak it ? but at this hour your life is perhaps only held at the will of the most profligate, the most reckless of men."

"Tush, tush ! this is indeed wild dreaming : what, do you think Mirialva has no fears for himself ? Too well he knows my father's vigour, and our house's power, to tempt, by any evil wrought on me, his own assured destruction. I would I were but half as certain of the safety of my poor Zingaro ally ; but he, I fear me, was allowed brief law. I would give, this very hour, the best horse, hound, and hawk I own to

save him from jeopardy, and that is higher pricing than was ever before put on him or any of his kind."

"They are indeed a wayward, but also a sore-suffering race," replied Constanza: "but if ever I am again restored to the seat of my fathers, you, Luigi, must look to their better ordering, even for the sake of him who read my fortune by the springs of *Gli Fonti D'Amore*."

"And died to have that fortune fairly sped," added the conte. "Even the lynx may be tamed to love, and I will waste some kindness on that rude race, but I will mend their sad condition, even for his sake who helped me to the sweetest bride Salmona ever saw, or Ovid sung; that is, provided she belie her sex and change not."

A look of love and pride beamed from the eyes of Constanza, as, striking her lyre, she prettily echoed the word "*change*," and sang—

"For ever thine this heart—
 Feel how it beats for thee,
 And while it beats, this heart of mine
 Will answer every throb of thine
 With truest sympathy;
 Thine, thine, alone!"

For ever thine this heart—
 All else may change, and be;
 But this, thy heart, no change can own,
 For thee it beats, for thee alone,
 And breaks, cast off by thee;
 Thine, thine, alone!"

For ever thine this heart—
 All else beneath the skies,
 The grass, the flower, earth, air, and sea,
 May pass away, again to be;
 The heart—for ever dies—
 Thine, thine, alone!"

The conte rose in delight from his lady's feet, where he had thrown himself to listen to her melody; the last tones of her sweet voice had not yet melted into the air when a slight movement was heard at the window—the words, "Die, coward and fool!" were articulated, in tones clear and piercing, though hardly uttered above the breath; one deep groan and a heavy fall followed—and all was silent as before.

The conte started, and passed hastily to the window,

close to which he at once observed the body of the fallen man. He stooped over the form; he pressed his hand upon the heart; but it beat no more; life had fled with the last sound. He was just opening his lips to call for aid, when a low hiss, issuing from the thick clump of shrubs close in his front, caused him to raise his head. What was his surprise, when full in the light of the moonbeam, with head uncovered, he beheld the well-remembered features of the Zingaro!

"Ha!" exclaimed the conte, "thou alive, and here! How means all this? speak!"

"Pianissimo, signor mio," whispered the gipsy; "it is ill speaking too loud of a death done where one's confession may be overheard by more than the priest. But fear nothing now: first assure thy lady's silence; for, if you remember, my face was not altogether after her liking when last she saw it, and I promise you it is not much improved in comeliness since; a cry from her lips now might peril me to the full as much as it did before; and by my life I have no mind for another such adventure."

The Conte Luigi turned into the chamber, where Constanza sat as if spellbound: she had heard the groan, had seen her husband's movement towards the sound, but at that moment her over-excited nerves failed beneath the shock, and she remained without the power of speech or motion.

"Be no longer alarmed, dearest Constanza," murmured the conte, trying to reassure his gentle wife; "'tis nothing; only a faithful varlet, who is now without, and whose appearance hitherto has ever been to us a harbinger of joy. Come, cheer thee to hear the marvel of his coming; perchance thy uncle has relented, and so released this trusty knave as a true pledge of his wish to conciliate."

"Trust not, oh! trust not to the baron," exclaimed Constanza, wildly, drawing the conte nearer to her; "for there is danger, my husband, and the presence of the Zingaro speaks it. That fearful groan too! Oh! said I not my soul foreboded evil? Luigi, rely not too

firmly on the faith of this strange being; many and fearful are the tales told of his people's treachery, and few and bold are they who place deep trust in them."

"Nay, be not unmindful of his true service, love. Remember, I owe to it all my present joys, and even those joys I'd freely pledge upon his faith: be not alarmed, and he shall himself speak out his errand." Luigi beckoned the Zingaro to advance: with a glance of bitter scorn, he planted his foot upon the corpse stretched in his way, and at once stepped into the apartment. Constanza shrunk within herself, as doubtfully she gazed upon his features. He was, in truth, much changed; his face and neck were in many places disfigured by blotches of deep red, these contrasted but ill with its natural hue: his once luxuriant hair, too, was almost gone; in some places it was shorn quite close to the blackened scalp, while here and there a stray lock remained, no longer flowing gracefully as before, but shrivelled and bristling from his head. His eye alone retained its native lustre, and bespoke that, though all without was altered, the ardent soul within still remained unchanged.

Bending low to the lady, he calmly stood as if waiting question.

"When," demanded the conte, "didst thou leave the Castell di Mirialva?"

"On the eve of your past Sabbath."

"By good leave, or—"

"Even by the way you entered it—the window; no bad way either, when a man needs more haste than help."

"How! You escaped from durance, then, and without the baron's knowledge?"

"Not so, either, signor; the baron learned, though somewhat at the latest, I was about to quit his hospitable keeping."

"Thou speakest somewhat in riddles, Zingaro. I have a courier despatched to the baron: knowest thou his present humour—how will my servant find him?"

"He may not well find *him*, conte, without first quitting your service."

"How so?"

"Because he whom he seeks no longer lives."

"Ha!"—Constanza sprung from the couch—"my uncle dead!"

"Start not, lady," coolly replied the Zingaro, "and speak not over-loud, for I stay not your questioning on roses. In brief, you are now, thanks to my fortune, once more in safety; may return to your fair domain, and live free and fearless, for your worst enemy is no more; he has died the death that best may fit him for the after-life. He was burnt!—burnt within that very house he held from his brother's child: he was swept from life planning the misery of her to whom he should have proved a sworn protector."

"Merciful God, assoilze his soul!" fervently prayed Constanza.

"The fire was accidental?" demanded the conte, closely regarding the man as he spoke. He smiled grimly as, lowering his voice, he answered with fearful earnestness,—

"The flames were lighted by me, to aid my escape from bondage and from certain death. What! did the slaves think to keep the falcon and not hood his eyes? Did they leave to the Zingaro one glimpse of the clear light of heaven, and look to have him yield without a struggle the life that light made dear?"

"Scourged like a hound, till my very bones lay bared to their lewd mockery, I was bound and thrown aside to wait till their pleasure served to hang me. Was I to bide their coming? No! I fired the detested den that held me, and broke once more to freedom from its blazing ruins as they crumbled round me.

"Thus at liberty, I had, perchance, contented me with my escape, but the ill spirit of the baron threw him in that wild moment across my way. Smarting from the fire I scarce had hoped to live through, I saw my pain, my hopes made by his presence in an instant void, and fresh tortures again awaiting me. One instant

effort promised both safety and revenge. I boldly, madly made the venture. Behold! I am safe—I am revenged. Even now his shriek from that mouldering chamber of death sounds again in my ear, and more than answers all my sufferings. He is no more! and you, Conte Luigi, are now free to live.

"Return to your castello, lady; 'tis little the worse for the airing I have given it. I read you fair fortune, and you have found it; may it ever bide with you! Signor, I owed you a *life*; we are now freely quitted, for I have saved you this night from as sudden an ending as awaited me that day when the hunter's belt was drawn round my throat in the forest of Venafro."

"How! my life—mean you that?"

"Look on this carrion," continued the Zingaro, as he turned over the body of the slain man with his foot; "stoop down, and know that evil face."

It was the countenance of Jocopec, for many years the porter of the Castell di Mirialva."

"What!" said Luigi, "would this man have struck the husband of his old master's child?"

"*He!*" interrupted the Zingaro, "he would have struck the husband of the mother that bore him for half the price set upon your head. On my escape I sought out this traitor, and caught him grovelling on a wrong scent. Unseen and unsuspected I soon found means to set him right: once well laid on the track I knew he'd stick to it."

"What!" cried Constanza, shuddering, "you guided him the way to *murder*?"

"Truly, lady, I left him not unguided; for from that hour I slept when he slept, and when he rose I rose; I breathed as he breathed, moved as he moved: we had but one shadow in the sun; but he dreamed not of this: full surely I *guided* him, even to his purpose and his end. He was blinded to my wish by the promised gold; it ever glittered before his eyes, and he saw no other object. But it is passed, and behold where he lies! Mark, signor, his hand is on the lock of the petronel whose report was to have pronounced you a

corpse, and him master of a thousand ducats. I watched his serpent-crawl to this very spot; I saw the felon-sparkle of his eye; I heard the short panting of his bated breath, and marked his deadly aim; but me he saw not, heard not, till he felt my blow."

"Heavens!" cried Constanza, "an instant later and the murder had been done."

The Zingaro smiled. "No, lady, think not I rested upon less than surety—his trusty petronel a truer friend of mine had rendered harmless. Blindly he incurred the penalty without the chance of murder."

"Strange being," inquired the conte, "why not have informed me of my danger, and left his punishment to justice?"

"What! would justice better have revenged my stripes than my own right hand has done? That one blow struck, I am again a man, and the mark of the lash will be no longer my shame. From my mother's breast, until the dark hour, but one hand ever inflicted disgrace on my free body—*this* hand it was."

He let the lifeless limb which he had grasped fall upon the path, and contemptuously gazed upon it.

"But why," said the count, "when you knew his purpose, why let him proceed so near to the fulfilment of his bloody errand?"

"Ha, ha! Conte Luigi, think you his mere death could appease my vengeance? No! I am well learned, that by the creed you hold crime once determined on is dealt with by *your* God as crime already done. Look there!—read the resolve to murder stamped upon his brow. Even with his last thought upon the bloody act, the damning wish recorded on his heart, the instrument of death, too, in his hand, I smote him! and, without one prayer for mercy, his soul is gone to its eternal account. Like his gratitude is also the vengeance of lo Zingaro—*senza limito*! But hark! I hear approaching footsteps."

He now gave a long, sharp hiss—a young female was in an instant by his side.

"Zea," he said, "there stands the man for whom

you have laboured; the only man who ever saved or spared any of our race. Thank him quickly, and let us begone to the mountain."

The girl advanced to the conte, and taking his hand, she pressed it with reverence to her forehead, while her eloquent look spoke volumes of thanksgiving.

"Allow me a few minutes' leave ere you have this foul carcass stirred," said the Zingaro; "for I would ill like further questioning. Nay, shudder not, lady," he added, "think upon my wild nature, and my cruel suffering. *Farewell!*"

The Zingaro and the maiden together disappeared as the attendant announced to the conte the return of his belated courier.

First requesting his father's presence, Luigi admitted the man, and from his lips heard the story of the Zingaro confirmed. He told how he had witnessed the removal of the blackened remains of the baron from the ruins of the still reeking chamber!—the fire, he said, had been promptly got under, and, indeed, extended little beyond the immediate suite of apartments where it first broke out.

He told, too, strange stories of the Zingaro, of his having spirited the poor baron to change places with him, through the Devil's aid, whom some of the attendants swore they saw personally engaged in feeding the flames, and at last take to flight through the broken casement, bearing the Zingaro on his huge wing, and leaving the spellbound baron to abide the fiery penalty.

On the man's being dismissed to entertain his awe-stricken fellows with these marvels, the conte imparted to his father the true but strange story of his preservation. The proper authorities were promptly assembled, and the necessary forms gone through; but as every evidence went to prove the purpose of the dead emissary of Mirialva, the conte was at once honourably installed, by the royal consent, in all the honours and wide domains of his fair runaway. Large rewards were offered for the apprehension of the incendiary, and orders

issued to clear the Abruzzo of the outlaw Zingari with fire and sword; but as the execution of these orders rested with the new baron, they were very differently interpreted.

CHAPTER V.

A TWELVEMONTH had passed away, and many mingled sounds of song and dance, and the light laugh of unrestrained glee, echoed round the old towers of the Castell di Mirialva; gay banners fluttered in the mountain-breeze from the lofty battlements, and the hillside swarmed with merry groups of peasants, who were eagerly watching the approach of a distant cavalcade, impatient to hail the first-born of their liege lady, the heir of the Conradini.

It was the anniversary of the festival of the Annunziata, and chosen by Constanza for the day that was to give the mother church one other member in her new-born son.

"I choose this day," said Constanza to her lord, "for it was on this day I met the mendicant palmer in the church of the Annunziata; but, though I love right well the gentle name of Luigi, yet shall this boy be called *Ovidio*, in remembrance of the spot where I staid to list my fair fortune."

The lady had her will, and it was her return from the convent the assembled vassals so eagerly abided. As the gay cortège approached the foot of the hill, Constanza turned her palfrey from the side of her infant's litter, and, calling to her lord to follow, gayly galloped over the yielding sward towards *Gli Fonti d'Amore*.

Together they reined up upon its margin; Constanza fondly pressed the hand of Luigi, and pointing to the rich olives whose branches swept the waters, she told how upon that spot her startled eye first rested on the

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Together they reined up upon its margin; Constanza fondly pressed the hand of Luigi, and pointing to the rich olives whose branches swept the waters, she told how upon that spot her startled eye first rested on the

dark form of the Zingaro. She waved her hand to hasten some of the approaching guests, when a female advanced from the thick shade of the trees, and, laying her finger impressively on her lip, motioned the conte to be gone, glancing at the same time upwards amid the branches. Following the direction of her look, the conte caught sight of the dark visage of the Zingaro, with finger on lip, just visible for an instant through the thick foliage. On this, whispering his discovery to Constanza, they quickly turned together and stayed the advance of their gentle followers. Loud shouts from the hill, at the same moment, bespoke the reception of Mirialva's future lord amid his happy vassals.

"Let us hasten to thank the honest knaves," said the conte, and in a moment quickly bounded each steed onward towards the castello.

The day was devoted to sumptuous festivity. At length the sounds of revelry were hushed; the banqueters, wearied with the fulness of their joys, were buried in profound repose. In the silence of their chamber, the conte and his fair wife, at length left alone, marvelled on their strange vision of that morning; for from the time he bade them farewell in the palace of the Conradini, no word of the eagerly sought Zingaro had reached their ears. The fond mother bent above the couch of her sleeping boy, and loudly prayed all evil might be averted from his innocent head, when—"Hark!"—the soft notes of music rose through the air. Imagining it to be a gallant device of their guests, or some rustic serenade, the conte and lady left their chamber, and advanced to that very window whence, twelve months before, they had so fearfully descended.

The night was close and calm, and the casement stood open to court the lazy air. Looking out to greet the serenaders, they recognised at once, standing in the shade below, the figures of the Zingaro and the dark young maiden. She was seated on the rude bench at the foot of the tower; before her lay a huge hound of the mountain breed, and by her side stood her com-

panion, his rude guitar in his hand. The count was about to address them, but motioning for silence, the Zingaro spoke in a low tone to the girl—

“Sing, Zea, sing to them the song of joy, made more welcome from thy lips; sing to them the song of our last parting.”

He pointed impressively towards the distant horizon's edge, and then softly swept the strings of his guitar, while, raising her dark eyes towards Constanza, the maiden obeyed, and sang the

PROPHECY.

“LADY, look from thy bower on high,
Look on yonder western sky,
Look o'er tree, o'er tower, and fountain,
Where the silver cloud sits on the mountain.

Look, lady, look, and mark the star,
Beaming so lightly from afar;
That star is a herald bearing joy
To thee and thy sleeping cherub boy.

I mark'd the day, I watch'd the hour,
I've read its errand, know its power;
It bears to that boy who cradled lies
All of good beneath the skies.

Success in love, in peace, in war,
High fame, and honour brings yon star;
Happy mother, now rest thee well,
His fortune's read! Farewell—farewell!”

Never again did the wild form of lo Zingaro cross the path of the Conradini, nor ever after this hour did the plaintive melody of his guitar awake the night.



EISENBACH;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF A STRANGER.

A METROPOLITAN STORY.

BY ANDREW PICKEN.

Marriage is a matter of more worth
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.

SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER I.

THE road from Kreuznach, or rather from Munster, towards the picturesque town of Bingen on the Rhine, is so beautiful, and the distance between the two latter places so short, that by the time I had got to that point in my journey, I determined to travel it on foot, and by myself, for no other reason that I can tell but because I wished to refresh my limbs by a walk, and had taken a concealed fancy for my own company.

Before I had arrived at the end of my day's excursion, however, I found that I had quite enough both of the one and the other; for though my "weary legs" did not actually break down, my head began positively to ache from the fervour of my own meditations, excited as they had been all day by the beauty of the scenery through which I had been passing; and I found that personal solitude, even in the noble valley of the Nah, becomes wearisome at length to a man of colloquial

propensities. Besides, I had been quite misinformed regarding the real charms of these parts, and as I mounted the pass of the Ruchesberg, near the chapel of Saint Roch, which overlooks the whole sweep of the valley, and which gave me the Rhine gleaming beneath me, up and down on the right—the quaint turrets of Bingen in the hollow reflected in its bosom, and the noble mountain of the Rudesheim in front of me—I contemplated the view across the valley,—I became so lost in poetry and other nonsense, that I quite forgot myself as usual, until common hunger and exhaustion began to remind me once more of the weakness of humanity.

I would not, however, as I descended the mountain, lose the last lowering glance of the sinking sun, which now deepened the black shadows of the rocky hills that skirted the horizon beyond the valley—and that lightened the bright green of the vineyards with which they were clothed, and reddened the picturesque summit of the Rudesheim beyond—for I hoped, that could I only reach Bingen this evening, I should there find some English people who would do me great civility for my money, and supply my lack of the Allemand language, by wholesome talk which I could reciprocate. But man is short-sighted, and so forth; a philosophical reflection which I found particularly pertinent to this present occasion—for by the time I had descended towards the lower grounds, the shadows of evening began to prevail to the eastward, the Rhine and the town in front of me seemed to recede away every step I took, and I was inclined to misdoubt whether I was not making a circle round the mountain, instead of proceeding mathematically to any Christian habitation. The usual troubles of a strayed traveller journeying in foreign lands now overtook me, and perplexed my thoughts exceedingly. Fancies drear crowded into my brain like the hollow wind that now began to moan in the distance, and to whisper strange words in my ears, while a certain exhausted receiver that I carried about with me seemed to yawn discontentedly, like the deep chasms that now grew dark among the surrounding valleys.

Philosophy, however, came again kindly to my aid, reminding me in the plenitude of its wisdom that I had no money wherewith to render me a worthy subject of any creditable robbery; that moreover, the Germans were an exceedingly honest people, and that, according to natural history, even the vultures and crows of those parts were of a kindly nature, and could not have the heart to pick out my eyes, even if, like a Bethlehem shepherd, I should be obliged to lie in the fields all night.

While preparing my mind for the worst that might happen, in this judicious and sensible manner, I found myself mounting a height on the borders of another small valley. The light seemed now again to brighten a little, and by it I perceived, peeping from among the woodland above me, the white turrets of a small mansion, or rather villa, which came by degrees into view from among the planting, and appeared to me at once, as in some way quite different from the usual dwellings in this part of Germany. The road soon passed within a few hundred yards of this house, the valley below swept up enchantingly among the mountains, the stream at the bottom turned into a little lake in the distance, and the white houses of a small hamlet studded with a lively effect the side of the hill on the opposite side of the hollow.

I was speculating within myself whether the tasteful little property beside me could belong to a native, when I heard a footstep pattering among the planting near, and the voice of a child to my astonishment cry out in English, "O! papa, here is a stranger going past, and I am sure he is an Englishman, for he wears such a pretty cap: do ask him in."

A fair-faced and exceedingly gentleman-like young man now came in view from among the shrubbery by the road, and observing me, seemed for an instant to hesitate whether or not he should address me. I put an end to his doubt by speaking first, and in English, and was agreeably surprised not only by an answer in the same tongue as I hoped for, but by an expression of congratulation at meeting me, and a warm invitation

to accept of the hospitality of his house. Nothing could have been more opportune at the moment. I accepted of his kindness with real joy, and in five minutes after was comfortably seated in a handsome parlour, so fitted up and furnished, that I almost imagined myself on the banks of the Thames or the Severn.

A slight German accent was all that distinguished my host from an Englishman—and when here on the frontier of Germany he began to ask me of the news from London, and to talk of persons and places with which I was familiar at home, I was almost as much delighted as his little daughter by his knee, who absolutely jumped with joy at hearing my English speech.

“I will not hear a word of apology, my good sir,” he said, “and if you can submit to plain fare, here you will be pleased to take up your quarters for the night,—for my wife is from home; I am, as you see, left alone with my little daughter—so the gratification from this chance-visit of a condescending stranger is all on my side,” and he finished his simple invitation by ordering in fruit and refreshments, with several varieties of that delicious Rhenish, that, drank among the valleys where it grows, is so grateful to the palate of the exhausted traveller.

“It is not wonderful that I am happy to see an Englishman, sir,” he continued; “my recollections of your country are most interesting,” and he looked in the pretty intelligent face of his child.

“Your lady is an Englishwoman, sir,” I said, evincing my usual penetration.

“She is, sir,—how happy she will be to see you, if you will do me the honour to be my guest till she return! She has left me for the night for a work of kindness at the bedside of a sick friend; for we have friends here, and she loves them too, it being my wife’s nature to love the good wherever she meets them. Excuse my egotism, sir, when I speak of her.”

“And your little daughter is her image, I dare say,” I ventured to observe, as I again contemplated with

pleasure the pure English features of the beautiful child, so different from the general plainness of the females of these parts.

The young man gazed on the smiling girl. I seemed to have touched the chord of that deep German feeling which belongs to the inhabitants of these valleys.—“She is her mother’s image,” he said; and as he clasped her convulsively in his arms, I turned my head away, that I might not seem to pry into the genuine emotion of the happy parent.

“And yet,” he added, “I can scarcely call myself a German; still less am I an Englishman. In truth, I have all my life been but a child of chance, if you will allow so unphilosophical a term. Chance made me a stranger wandering the world for many years. Chance took me to England. Chance procured me friends there, as it has your society this evening. Chance has made me a happy man, while it might have made me miserable. But Providence is the better word and the truer, and I am fortunate and thankful.”

I was positively interested by the conversation and manner of my host, and began to think myself quite favoured in meeting with him, particularly here, finding he had lived in England.

“But you are not to suppose,” he afterward said, “that I saw nothing but beauty and virtue in London. In the chances of my stay in that capital there came in my way the usual persons and characteristics which draw often such contrasts into life—which mix its incidents, or which, like sounds of painful discord, succeed each other with such grating effect upon the tympanum of experience. I saw, of course, virtue for a time in the grasp or the toils of guilt—gentleness of spirit harassed or alarmed by unfeeling grossness. Along with many better things I saw weakness and waywardness making up the sum of human impulses—chance and desert working out the sum of human life.”

With the jealousy of all enthusiasm, and the matter-of-fact way of thinking attributed to my countrymen, I could not help smiling at this speech of my new friend;

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The Zingaro and the maiden together disappeared as the attendant announced to the conte the return of his belated courier.

First requesting his father's presence, Luigi admitted the man, and from his lips heard the story of the Zingaro confirmed. He told how he had witnessed the removal of the blackened remains of the baron from the ruins of the still reeking chamber!—the fire, he said, had been promptly got under, and, indeed, extended little beyond the immediate suite of apartments where it first broke out.

He told, too, strange stories of the Zingaro, of his having spirited the poor baron to change places with him, through the Devil's aid, whom some of the attendants swore they saw personally engaged in feeding the flames, and at last take to flight through the broken casement, bearing the Zingaro on his huge wing, and leaving the spellbound baron to abide the fiery penalty.

On the man's being dismissed to entertain his awe-stricken fellows with these marvels, the conte imparted to his father the true but strange story of his preservation. The proper authorities were promptly assembled, and the necessary forms gone through; but as every evidence went to prove the purpose of the dead emissary of Mirialva, the conte was at once honourably installed, by the royal consent, in all the honours and wide domains of his fair runaway. Large rewards were offered for the apprehension of the incendiary, and orders

issued to clear the Abruzzo of the outlaw Zingari with fire and sword; but as the execution of these orders rested with the new baron, they were very differently interpreted.

CHAPTER V.

A TWELVEMONTH had passed away, and many mingled sounds of song and dance, and the light laugh of unrestrained glee, echoed round the old towers of the Castell di Mirialva; gay banners fluttered in the mountain-breeze from the lofty battlements, and the hillside swarmed with merry groups of peasants, who were eagerly watching the approach of a distant cavalcade, impatient to hail the first-born of their liege lady, the heir of the Conradini.

It was the anniversary of the festival of the Annunziata, and chosen by Constanza for the day that was to give the mother church one other member in her new-born son.

"I choose this day," said Constanza to her lord, "for it was on this day I met the mendicant palmer in the church of the Annunziata; but, though I love right well the gentle name of Luigi, yet shall this boy be called *Ovidio*, in remembrance of the spot where I staid to list my fair fortune."

The lady had her will, and it was her return from the convent the assembled vassals so eagerly abided. As the gay cortège approached the foot of the hill, Constanza turned her palfrey from the side of her infant's litter, and, calling to her lord to follow, gayly galloped over the yielding sward towards *Gli Fonti d'Amore*.

Together they reined up upon its margin; Constanza fondly pressed the hand of Luigi, and pointing to the rich olives whose branches swept the waters, she told how upon that spot her startled eye first rested on the

about to give me a false name—"I will abandon the room," and I rose and walked down stairs.

Hating to enter the public room of a middling hotel, I preferred standing by the pillar at the door, particularly as I wished to have a look at the person who thus strangely had interested me, and turned me out of my apartment.

I lingered, however, nearly an hour without his again making his appearance, and was about returning to remonstrate with the landlord, when the same servant again entered the hotel, and instantly after a travelling-chariot drew up to the door. Two persons only were seated in it, one a sickly melancholy-looking gentleman, not, however, much beyond middle age; the other a lady, muffled up and veiled so that I could not see her face. They did not alight, but while the horses were watered and refreshed, the lady seemed endeavouring to persuade the sickly man to something to which he would not assent, and as I stepped a little aside I heard the sweet and tender tones of her voice remonstrating with him, while he answered her with a crabbed roughness and seeming contempt that made my heart bleed for her, whoever she might be.

On casting my eyes within the hall of the inn, I observed, to my astonishment, the servant of the strange gentleman making every effort, by looks and signs, to attract the observation of the lady in the chariot. She perceived him at length, and looked steadily towards him. In a minute after I saw her lift the edge of her veil, and looking upwards, fix her eyes upon the window at which I had just been sitting. What could this mean? for I had seen no one enter the house since I had left that room. Stepping across the way, however, I observed the black curled head of the gentleman whom I had seen in the lane, who had evidently entered the hotel by a back-door, and whose large and intelligent black eyes now seemed to seek those of the lady with the greatest anxiety. I would myself have given any thing to obtain a sight of her face, but could not, and only heard, as I again drew near, her soft pleading

tones, and the tart and short replies with which they were greeted by the disagreeable person who sat beside her.

At length I saw the servant of the stranger and one of the waiters of the inn in close communication, and in a short time after, the latter, handing some fruit to the lady at the carriage window, slipped into her hand a small piece of paper, which he had concealed under a bunch of grapes. The nervous emotion with which she clutched the billet affected me, and made me almost ashamed of thus watching her; and as I turned to enter the hotel, the cross and piercing tones of her companion, blaming her, or uttering a crabbed malediction on the servant for thus delaying them, entered my very soul, as I am sure they did that of the poor female who was obliged to endure such behaviour. In an instant after the whip was laid to the horses, and I saw no more of this strange couple, and before another five minutes had passed, the landlord came bowing to where I stood, and with many apologies informed me that the apartment I had so obligingly given up was again at my service.

"And where is the strange gentleman?"

"He is gone, sir."

"When, or how?"

"From the court-gate behind, just this instant."

"Pray who is he?"

"I never inquire the name of my guests, sir; it is not my business; and I never even say, 'my lord,' or 'your grace,' in addressing those who honour my house with their custom, unless it may be a nobleman's pleasure to travel by his own title."

It is vexatious to have one's curiosity excited, and then to know nothing. "It will be very odd," said I to myself, "if the chances of life do not throw in my way some clew to this affair when I get to London." I little knew then how wide a place London is.

CHAPTER II.

UPON my arrival in the capital I found myself for a considerable time, like other friendless persons, a lost man among the busy myriads of the English metropolis. Knowing no one, and unwilling to make any acquaintance with those who looked upon me with suspicion because I had no friends, I passed away my time in that weary solitude which has been so often felt in a great town by strangers like myself.

But though I went every where, and saw every thing that strangers see, and looked in every face that passed me, for want of something better to do, I never could set my eyes upon the remarkable man whom I had observed at Dover, and who, together with the lady, still continued to occupy my thoughts with an unaccountable curiosity. Why I should continue to concern my mind about them seemed odd even to myself; for as for the lady it was not possible that I should know her again, never having seen her face, and as for the gentleman, who had acted so mysteriously, I had seen him at such a distance and for so short a period, that it was doubtful if I should among the thousands of London be again able to identify his person. Yet I could not get either him or the seemingly ill-treated lady out of my head. I looked for them so eagerly in all public places, and my mind dwelt so much on the slight circumstance I have related, that for want probably of better employment, curiosity concerning them became almost a disease, and I would have given any thing to have had it gratified.

About a fortnight after my arrival in London, proceeding along one of the crowded streets in the west end on one of those fine days when all the beauty and fashion of the metropolis may be met out of doors, I observed

a gentleman walking slowly before me, whose noble figure and elegance of dress were almost distinguishing even among the numbers of handsome men around me. Before I could pass him to obtain a look of his face, however, a servant with a led horse came hastily riding up. The gentleman mounted it, while I involuntarily watched him. Chancing to cast my eye towards the servant, I knew him at once to be the same that I had seen at Dover, and stepped hastily forward to get a proper sight of his master. It was in vain, however, that I even tried to catch the profile—the horse's head was turned round as he threw himself into the saddle, and putting spurs to the animal, he and the man were in an instant out of my sight.

A few days after this, while in a different part of the town, and happening at the time to be musing upon this very circumstance, my eye rested upon the figure of a lady, as, issuing from the door of a mansion, she crossed the flags to her carriage. As she passed before me and showed her ankle in ascending the steps, I noticed her only as one of those fine figures of women so often seen in this land of beauty; but looking carelessly at the carriage as I passed, the arms on it at once struck upon my recollection.—They were the very same as were on that carriage at Dover which contained persons who had so very much interested me. This *must* have been the lady—I strode forward to observe her face. The blinds, however, were drawn up in a moment. Crack went the coachman's whip, and in two minutes the vehicle was out of sight.

I now began to see the absurdity of this involuntary curiosity about persons whom I was never likely to meet, and determined to watch for them no more. For several weeks I succeeded in forgetting them, when, coming out of the Argyle Rooms one evening after a concert, I heard two ladies in the crowd whispering eagerly, and one say to the other, "Look—there—that is he!"

"Where?"

"Just beyond the fat lady."

"Oh, I see him—what an elegant young man! But is it actually true?"

"I am convinced it is—but as yet it is a mere whisper."

I looked in the direction that the ladies pointed to, but I could only see a section of the face, yet I was certain it was the strange gentleman. I pushed forward, but the towering headdress of a tall woman came between me and the object, and, whatever way I turned my head, was sure to intercept my efforts for a look. I could not push past her without absolute rudeness, and before I was relieved from this annoyance the strange gentleman was completely lost in the crowd.

If there could be any excuse for such absurd curiosity, a lady only ought to have made it pardonable in a man—and as to her that was associated in it, I had never actually seen her, and never was likely to do so, in such a manner at least as to identify her with the object of my anxiety. But if the mind once employs itself long or frequently upon any one object, what that object may be is of no consequence as to the interest taken in it. All the sights and scenes of London were stale, flat, and insipid, compared to my obtaining authentic information regarding those three persons who had attracted and upheld my curiosity from the first hour of my arrival in England.

I soon began to find that my present state of mental solitude was not the best, and far from being the most safe for one of my character, for it gave me too much the habit of reading faces and catching impressions from them, which, as beauty was no rarity in London, might end in consequences very serious to my happiness. A thoughtful stranger wandering about the streets of the metropolis is naught else but a walking intellect—a moving reader of the world's book—a meditative unit of mind, which, giving out nothing, imbibes as it goes those impressions and observations upon which it afterward chews the cud of inference and reflection.

This was my case, and an escape from this brood-

ing solitude I found the more necessary, as, in the course of my perambulations in public places, I had been much struck with two faces, one of which at least began to take firm hold of my fancy. It was that of a young female of about eighteen, one of those quiet but touching beauties which the eye cannot long contemplate without drawing in the heart, and which it involuntarily turns away from gazing upon, from an instinctive deference to the power of simple loveliness.

The other face was that of a man who had insinuated himself into my conversation one evening, when I met him among some foreigners at the Café de l'Europe, and which, at least in its indications and expression, was the very contrast of the touching sweetness and innocent beauty of the girl. He was a person of about forty—with a salacious, I should almost say swinish eye, a gluttonous if not dissipated look, and a patch of bald on the crown of a frowsy head. Although shrewd, and by no means wanting in intelligence, he was one of those brutish versions of humanity which a mind of any delicacy must instinctively hate. I was involuntarily impelled to abhor the character that this man's countenance predicated to be his. Yet one of those chance circumstances which often bring in contact persons the most dissimilar in their nature brought, for the most providential purposes, this coarse man and me into some intimacy. I afterward learned that his name was Compton, and that he was rich, and by profession a lawyer, and occasionally a money-lender.

Finding myself too solitary in an hotel or a private lodging, I determined, rather than live without society, to seek it by boarding with a respectable family. An advertisement in a newspaper soon procured me what I wanted. The house I was directed to was in a good street in the west. The apartments I liked. The landlady was smart, and a notable Englishwoman. Two other gentlemen, I was informed, were domiciled in the house. What was my surprise, on sitting down to the first dinner with the guests of this establishment, to find myself introduced to the Mr. Compton whom I have

just mentioned! His very countenance deprived me at first of all appetite, and to add to my annoyance he drank wine with me all dinner, and attached himself to me as my particular friend. I determined to leave the house with all haste, but this determination was not so easily accomplished.

Meantime, though forswearing this constant reading of faces, I could not help going once more to the crowded drive in your Hyde Park, to obtain one other look of that beautiful, that fascinating countenance which had now almost become the delight of my existence. For a long time the sweet female did not appear, but just as I was about to leave the crowded spot, I perceived the plain and modest green chariot in which, accompanied by an elderly lady or gentleman, she usually rode. A chock of carriages stopped the line, and as theirs stood for a time, I observed a gentleman leaning over the rails and gazing on her. With the selfishness no doubt of jealousy, as well as from a feeling of admiration and deference, I felt indignant to see so sweet a creature so eagerly stared at by another. What was my astonishment when, as at length lifting his head, I recognised in the gazer the large black eyes of the stranger whom I had thought of with so much curiosity since I first saw him at Dover!

The admiration with which I had regarded the fascinating female in the carriage was but a passing gleam of the sunshine of beauty, at which a traveller stranger might look and be satisfied; but now I seemed to live but under the influence of this peculiar man, of whom I had only this day obtained a proper sight; for, whereas before I had the most unaccountable wish to see him, and could not for all my anxiety gratify my curiosity, from this day forward I saw him every day and in every place, as if he had been absolutely haunting me. Go where I would, in any public place, I was sure to meet him. If I went out in the morning he was almost the first man I met. If I rode to the country I could not look over my shoulder but I perceived him riding after me. If I went to the park he was there already, and

stared at me as he passed with a dull and haughty smile, as if he knew me. If I tried to avoid him by going to church I was sure to find him in the very next pew to myself. Could all this be accident, or was I under some enchantment? He was a handsome man, with extremely dark eyes and very white teeth, and his whole physiognomy sometimes put on a most peculiar expression. Was I too idle that I thus observed him, or too imaginative that I thought thus about him? or had he thrown some spell over me? I really know not, but every time I saw him afresh a nervous sensation ran through me. He made me forget even the interesting angel that had so often delighted my fancy in the park. Who or what could he be? Was he any ordinary living mystery? Was he Mephistophilis walking the earth? or was he the allegorical demon of England, who mocked the curiosity and froze the feelings of the stranger?

Avoiding him by staying at home for two or three days, I soon convinced myself that I was too solitary in mind and too abstracted to think justly, and that by a species of involuntary yet indulged musing upon single objects, I was all this time making something out of absolute nothing. The society at the boarding-house began to break in upon my reserve. The young men quizzed me, and the landlady bantered me, and as for Mr. Compton he laughed at me with so much good humour, and rallied me with so much clumsy good sense, that my prejudices against him began to give way, and I talked to him with even an approach to freedom.

"I doubt not, Mr. Eisenbach," said he, "that you think yourself exceedingly deep and penetrating, and that when you go back to Germany you will write a perfectly correct account of English society, seeing that you know it so intimately. Nay, do not deny it, for I know that that is your drift; and I myself will give you several hints which you will find particularly valuable. But I would not have you to give yourself much further trouble in diving into the depths of English

manners, having evidently such large opportunities of acquiring knowledge, for a man always writes with most zeal upon a subject that he does not understand."

"I certainly don't understand *you*."

"So much the better. It is by want of understanding that the world thrives, for there is no confidence like the confidence of ignorance; and if your book itself was understood, it would have but little success. But, harkee, you'll never get out of England without being taken in."

"How mean you?"

"Why, courted."

"What! *I* courted?"

"To be sure. The courtship in England is all done by women, and you are just the honest softling to be wooed and won, if you only have plenty of the *geldt* to make it worth the while of mothers and single sisters to sue for your hand. But when you are *in* for it, if you happen to like your wife and wish to live godly and honest, without horns above your ears, I would advise you to take her beyond the Rhine with you, or at least out of London; for although the French fashion in this respect is rather *out* at present, there are strange doings occasionally take place in town."

"The English women are allowed to be exceedingly virtuous?"

"They are so in general. But what between ill-assorted marriages daily made for the sake of fortune, and the arts of certain showy men on town; what between the monotony of English life, which makes even the semblance of intrigue so seducing, as it is so dangerous,—there are things happen now and then which help to swell the muddy stream of human guilt, and to keep up the bitter tide of private misery."

"This is strong language; but know you of any late occurrence that causes you to speak so?" and as I spoke the still unexplained scene at Dover came naturally across my mind.

"Yes; but if I told you you would put it in your book."

"Pshaw! I am not going to make a book."

"Pon your honour?" said my new friend, with affected vulgarity, and looking incredulously in my face. "Well, my friend, if you don't write a book while you are ignorant you have little chance of doing so when you come to know something; for ignorant people always write most and fastest; and those who are more ignorant still like a book the better for containing little that is of any value. But excuse me," he added, taking out his watch, "my hour is come—I have a d——d drunken affair to go to to-night, which will probably keep me very late,"—and thus saying, and swallowing the *débris* of his wine, he left the company to take a deeper dose somewhere else.

The resources of a stranger and a bachelor are few, even in London; at least I found them so. His very pleasures are solitary, and if not, are sure to be in some shape mercenary or interested. I took up my hat, and having the privilege of a seat in one of the common sort of boxes, I determined to while away the evening at the opera.

The house was thin, and the box into which I had the *entrée* contained already two ladies, friends of the owner, accompanied only by a spoiled boy. I felt my situation awkward, as a stranger in England will often do, but putting on the dogged dulness of a thick-headed John Bull, to avoid that hateful suspicious look with which in London a foreign face is usually regarded, I sat down behind the women without speaking.

The music that I heard was elaborate and unmeaning, and as for the ballet it was well enough, only that it was a mere repetition as usual. But the ladies in front of me held a whispering conversation, which, becoming exceedingly earnest, I was, though not an eaves-dropper, obliged to give attention. It might be only a tale of private scandal, but from the manner in which they talked they seemed to have found a mine of family romance, the details of which I could only catch by snatches and single words, but over which the speakers gravely shook their heads as they hinted at

strange facts and stranger surmises, deep guilt and deeper suffering, which formed another painful illustration of the weakness and the waywardness of poor human nature.

Could it be possible that there could be any identity between this tale and what I had observed at Dover? But I could learn nothing connectedly, for probably nothing satisfactory was known by the ladies after all. In the words I overheard there seemed to be dim reminiscences of an envied bride and a proud bridegroom, of a splendid sacrifice to Hymen which the fashionable long talked of, and of Continental adventures afterward, which were only known by innuendoes to the world, and spoken of chiefly among the servitor orders, in dark and doubtful whisperings. Then there were hints of open assignations and midnight manœuvres, and bribed servants and dark passages, and of a strange man whom no one knew, who had lately been seen on the streets of town.

Of this person the ladies spoke with perfect enthusiasm, while yet, with reference to his conduct, they affected disgust and indignation. In the hyperbolic language of female admiration, he was described as one who dressed as no man had ever dressed before, and looked as no other man in England ever looked:—a man of high title and haughty bearing, with a complexion admirable, because un-English—a profile like that of the masterpieces of Phidias, and a mustache overlooking a scornful lip, that had about it the very curl and authority of aristocracy.

As to the lady, her beauty was spoken of in those critical and doubtful terms in which one woman usually talks of the attractions of another. Gay and fascinating once, she was described as so no longer, and was now never seen in public unless it might be in that very house, the opera, where, added the ladies, she might possibly be that very evening.

While listening to this gossip, my eye was much struck by a face which I observed to steal occasionally from behind the curtain of a box nearly opposite. The

countenance retired quickly, and I again lost its bold and almost magnificent expression of beauty. I laid my head back and kept the glass to my eye for a quarter of an hour, while I watched for the reappearance of this hidden star that eclipsed all others around it. While thus occupied I heard the door of the box next to the one where I sat opened, and a single man, as appeared by the heavy foot, ushered in. Again I saw the head of the lady I was watching come forth from behind the curtain to look at Pasta, and to my astonishment she slowly and with seeming caution turned her face towards where I was, and, as I thought, gave a hasty glance exactly at myself. I kept my glass to my eye, instinctively impelled to observe the motions of this apparition. I declare on my soul I saw her smile and almost make a sign to me—it seemed evidently to me. I could not mistake it, but in another instant the face was lost behind the curtain.

It was now my disposition, as a stranger, to be curious and observing, and solitude had made me thoughtful. I began to wonder what could cause a single individual to come to the opera so late as the man in the next box had done. Again I saw the lady opposite look across. It now struck me that it was not to me but to this late-coming stranger that she had seemed to smile.

The great curtain of the stage was about to drop, and I should soon know nothing. My curiosity was not to be restrained, and putting my head out to get a sight of my neighbour, I saw a black, foreign-looking head, which turning round at my seeming impertinence, the large dark eyes of the man by whom I had of late been haunted glared full upon me. I declare I was seized with an absolute tremor, and as the house rose, I found a sort of refuge in losing myself in the crowd of the crush-room without. But by the time I had arrived at the colonnade below, and my ears began to be stunned by the shouts of the servants and people calling for the carriages of the nobility, my curiosity returned, impelling me to try, if possible, to obtain a sight of the lady.

This attempt was useless now; for though silks rustled around me, and lights glared above, and forms of beauty flitted past, and all the perfumes of Paris wafted across my sense, the crowd was too great for me to see any one distinctly, unless I had made myself more obtrusive than it was my nature to do.

Just as I had got, however, among the soldiers and valets, who served to choke up the outer vomitory of the theatre, the steps of a carriage without the columns were let down with a rattle, and I turned my head to look at its intended and probably fair occupants. A noble female figure, wrapped in a carriage-cloak, swam past me like a queen. As she bent herself in stepping into the carriage, I had a single glance of a bold Roman profile, which might have suited that of Lucretia herself. I could see no more save a dark eyelash, but a portion of the headdress, which I was able to notice, informed me at once. I knew it was the very same I had seen from behind the curtain—at least I thought so. I tried to get another look to assure myself, but the crowd jostled me out of sight, and I only heard the carriage rattle off down the street, while I elbowed my way forth towards my lodgings almost in a fever of ungratified and yet strongly-excited curiosity and interest, concerning some persons I could not tell whom.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN I got to the door of my own home, some fancy struck me, of waywardness or of an odd humour, and I could not bear to enter it. Though the night was by no means particularly inviting, I turned away, and determined, late as it was, to make up for my late confinement, by strolling away some distance, before I attempted to sleep. I was by no means well acquainted

with London, so, proceeding northward, I was soon lost among turnings and crossings.

Wandering through that labyrinth of dull streets that shoot up their tiers of long windows and tire the eye with their eternal sameness from Piccadilly to the Regent's Park, on turning a corner, and looking down one of those interminable lines of lamps that blind the eyes and fatigue the imagination, a figure intervened in the near distance, which, by continuing for a considerable time in my view, and by its slow tread and measured movement, strongly attracted my observation.

Striding forward to get nearer, I observed that the figure wore an elaborately fasselated cloak, while a crushed opera-hat was placed out of all keeping upon his thickly furnished head, as if stuck on to help to disguise the wearer.

There are individuals who, when the eye once fixes upon them, excite one's curiosity we know not why. By his stately gait and muffled elaboration of Spanish cloak, the man before me impressed me with the idea that he was a person of rank; but why such a man should be wandering the streets of London on foot at this hour could not well be accounted for, unless some secret intrigue was supposed, which might make it unsafe to employ any decent vehicle. When this fancy had once got into my head, after what I had overheard at the opera, I was instantly smitten with that woman's curiosity which still was at hand, and determined to watch the motions of the stranger.

Crossing to the opposite side of the street to prevent suspicion, I at length observed the cloaked man stop at one of those large black doors so common in the west of London; but instead of seeking admittance to the mansion by the bold and decided knock and ring of aristocracy, I observed him touch the great door gently by three light taps with the head of his cane, when instantly the door opened, as if a servant had been stationed behind it to wait for him, and the next moment he was out of my sight.

The incident struck me as so singular, that, stepping

across the street, I determined at least to mark the house into which the stranger had been thus suspiciously admitted, and afterward to inquire the name of the street, in case any event should occur to give me a clew to the affair. I stepped up to the door, and in looking up close to it for a number or name, I unintentionally gave it a slight push with my hand. To my astonishment it swung wide open; and as if an infatuation of curiosity was over me, in another instant I was in the interior of the hall.

I had stepped in, in the first instance, to catch hold of the door, and shut it again without being observed. I did so, but finding no one near, and the entrance lighted only by a single lamp borne by a statue in a niche on the staircase, I stood for a moment inside to take another observation. I listened, and heard feet as if cautiously ascending the stairs from an inner hall, for the mansion was extensive and magnificent, yet to me it had a strangely dead and sombre appearance.

I ventured three or four paces within to listen with better effect. I heard a foot softly treading, but it seemed at a distance. What was my consternation when on looking upwards I perceived a servant stealthily descending the great stairs almost immediately over me. Fortunately I was not seen. Stepping behind a pillar until he should pass, I observed the man go directly to the hall-door. He uttered an oath when he found it scarcely closed, but my feelings may be conceived when as I stood trembling behind the pillar, I saw the fellow double-lock and chain the door, and taking out the key, proceed with a grumble of characteristic profanity at his own stupidity to place the heavy instrument in his pocket; then putting out the dim light on the staircase, he walked past me, and descended towards the apartments below.

I was so amazed at the situation in which I now found myself, thus accidentally locked into a strange mansion, that for a few minutes I stood behind the pillar perfectly stupified. I saw that to get out from this unpleasant predicament I must make myself known to the

inmates, and what excuse to frame or how to face them I knew not. Undoubtedly I had, with the most thoughtless folly, made myself an object of serious suspicion; and I saw that to get out of durance explanations would be necessary that could not fail to be exceedingly degrading. But when I began to anticipate the sale of this adventure getting abroad in the public, and coming to the ears of those I lived among, my face burned with forestalled shame, and my heart became absolutely sick with vexation.

I was beginning to rally my courage, however, when I heard a door open above, and a heavy step proceed along the passage. Immediately after I perceived an elderly woman, having the appearance of a sick-nurse, come tottering down the back-stairs. Every thing within this dwelling was eagerly observed by me, in order that I might obtain some idea of the sort of house into which I had got; and whether it was the deception of my agitated feelings I knew not then, but the eyes of the woman glared strangely as she passed down, as if she was intoxicated. Where on earth could I have got to? The beldam hobbled off with her candle in her hand, and soon was lost among the apartments below.

While considering what I should do, I heard a feeble voice issuing from an apartment overhead, and calling repeatedly some name which I could not distinguish. I listened anxiously as I went towards the stairs, and at every repetition of the feeble and entreating cry, I mounted up a few steps higher, impelled now by sympathy even more than by curiosity, until I soon found myself on the first landing-place, and gazing towards the open door whence the sound proceeded.

"Hannah! Hannah!"—cried the voice. "Is there no one here to attend me? Hannah, I say!—Oh, must I lie here and die of thirst!"

I stepped involuntarily towards the open door—

"Is there no one there? Where are all my servants? Where is my wife this week past?" continued the voice. "What serves all my wealth, when here I die of burning thirst? Ah, cursed wealth, without love

—cursed wealth—I choke! I choke! Oh, could I only reach that glass, that mocks my parched tongue!”

The appeal was too much for my excited feelings—and forgetting every thing else, I walked into the chamber, and lifting the glass, towards which the sick man looked with harrowing eagerness, I held it to his lips.

“Ha!—he!—he!” uttered the feeble sick man, after he had drunk hastily, and looking up in my face with a delight that partook of the idiocy either of raving fever or of insanity—“What brought you here, Lodowick, to give me my drink? Ha! he!—don’t you know me?”

The address astonished me, when I looked in the emaciated countenance of the sick gentleman, and tried to recall a dim fancy of having seen it before. I had seen it certainly, but where or when I could not at the moment think of; for the eyes were so sunk with illness, and their expression so altered by mental imbecility, that past recollections were confounded in the pain of the spectacle.

“Hark’ee, Lodowick,” whispered the sick person feebly, and still under the imagination that he knew me, “If you find that drunken old nurse on the stairs, be sure you throw her over!—be sure you do!—Oh, I am a poor wretched man!” and the pained invalid shut his eyes and groaned with a heart-touching moan.

He again opened his eyes, and gazed steadfastly upon me. “Shall I help you to more drink?” I said compassionately.

“Hell and fury!”—screamed the sick man, his countenance now changing into an expression of horror as he gazed on me—“you are not Lodowick! I know what you want. You have come here after my wife—my false wife!—but I might have known all this—for she never, never loved me—and some one such a woman must love—Oh, I am an unhappy man!”

“I solemnly assure you, sir, I have never seen her.”

The countenance again lost its energetic wildness, and assumed its pleased and half-imbecile expression.

—"Is that really the case, friend?" he said as he still gazed—"and you attending upon me here while my own servants leave me to die. But hark!" he whispered, "there is that drunken old devil coming up again. I cannot get rid of her, for she deceives even my wife, by pretending kindness to me, while she neglects me all night. Now, my friend, will you just watch till she gets to the top of the stairs, and then pitch her over—pitch her just over—head and heels—he! he!"

"I will," said I, glad of an excuse to leave this sad scene; "I'll soon do for her;" and again I stepped out into the passage.

"This is the most extraordinary exhibition of wealth and misery," said I to myself, "that ever presented itself to my observation. Where on earth can I have got to? and where is this odd adventure to end?"

A light shot upwards from the back-stairs and across the corridor, and the old nurse now came clambering up the stairs, carrying her taper in one hand and a bottle in the other, which obliged me to mount the second flight to escape her observation. As I looked down, I observed that the wretch was nearly daisy, but fearing to meet her eye, I hastily mounted the next stair, and in a few moments more I found myself on the second story of this strange mansion.

"How, in the name of fortune, am I to be relieved from this awkward predicament?" I again asked myself, "and where have I got to? Never did a house appear less likely for a scene of intrigue than this dismal mansion, and yet I am certain I saw that dark, solemn, aristocratical figure enter it."

My reflections were interrupted by a murmuring sigh, which evidently came from only a short distance, and stepping a few paces inward, I perceived the dark corridor crossed by a stream of light, which proceeded from a room in the passage, the door of which stood slightly ajar.

"By Heavens!" said I mentally, "since I am in this situation, I will take my chance of every consequence, in order to get at the bottom of the mysteries that

, appear about the inmates of this house," and I stepped up quite close to the slightly opened door.

I thought I heard a murmuring sound, as if of a soft whisper from within, but as I stood to listen, all was again silent. The door, moved by the draft of air from below, edged a little more open, and I could partly see inside. The glimpse of magnificence and of luxury that I obtained whetted my curiosity, now, as I was prepared for any personal exposure; and touching the door lightly, it moved half-open. The one glance of rich curtains and couches, gilding and decoration, that first caught my eye, convinced me that I was looking into no ordinary apartment, and the idea of a lady's boudoir, but more Parisian than English, came instantly across me, accompanied by that guilty feeling which one may well experience who ventures within the inner recesses of an Eastern harem.

The light seemed to burn low, but I next had a glimpse of the table, on which was placed a dim lamp, which stood on a tripod, fancifully supported by carved figures, and shed its mellow light over crystal decanters and glasses, wherein the dark ruby colour of wine, with fruits and refreshments, served in silver, and crowded together under the softened light, gave an idea of gorgeous and profuse luxuriance. The sight that next presented itself, however, almost took the light out of my eyes. The bust of a lady appeared beyond the table, as she sat with her arms folded over her breast, and seemed to gaze with an expression of excitement on some object which I could not as yet see. A noble, heroic bust it was, a white throat, and part of the bared bosom to be seen, her shoulder just touched by the curling tendrils of a bouquet of dark clustering hair, which towered above a head of the most classic form. Her lips began to move, but emitted only a whisper; she turned her face a little, and I detected in an instant the bold and striking, yet lovely feminine features of the lady whom I had seen enter the carriage, and whom I could not mistake as the very same which I had watched looking stealthily from behind the curtain at the opera.

"For mercy's sake, Georgiana, do not use me thus; I can bear any thing but this," exclaimed passionately a man's voice from within.

The lady sighed, and compressed her lips, but replied not.

"What have I done, Lady Stains, to merit this treatment?"

"A slight thing for a man of gallantry," said the lady bitterly, but yet with scornful dignity,—"only ruined me—ruined me, my lord—that's all."

"How can you say so, Lady Stains? when after all my assiduity, all that my unconquerable love has impelled me to do and to submit to for your sake, I have never until this night obtained one half-hour's private—"

"Are you not at this moment," interrupted the lady, "alone with me in my boudoir after midnight, and Sir Archibald's own servant privy to it? Has the world leisure to judge from any other than exterior circumstances, and is it its way to take the favourable view of the conduct of those whom it envies or affects to pity? Alas! you, my lord, and my own thoughtless heart, which has given you too much encouragement, and my girlish ambition, and my mercenary relations who have placed me in the unnatural circumstances in which I am, have ruined me—ruined me! Oh, if it were possible in this world for unintentional guilt to retrace its steps—"

"Guilt! my lady—how can you talk thus when you know—"

"Is not that very assiduity that you make your boast guilt, when I did not peremptorily forbid it? Is not this meeting deep guilt on my part? Were any one of the world's prowlers after matter of scandal standing this moment behind that door, and watching us now, would the eaves-dropping wretch not call us a guilty pair, and proclaim my deep delinquency to the greedy ears of a rejoicing world, before the morning's dawn; or hold me up one day to scorn in a public court of justice, by

witnessing, with the holy Evangelists at his lips, my everlasting infamy?"

My feelings may be conceived at this moment, as the lady paused in her passionate speech, when I thought of my present predicament; but I stood perfectly still, prepared for the worst.

"For Heaven's sake, Georgiana, do not speak so loud; and see, the door is wide open. Allow me,"—and I heard the speaker rise from his seat.

"No, my lord, you shall not, unless you mean to leave me this instant," cried the lady. "We are not come to that—to be shut in together."

The noble paramour seemed to resume his seat, while I stood doggedly where I was, but trembling, I confess, with conscious shame, and only patting my head occasionally past the door to catch a glimpse of the lady.

"My lord," she said, after a moment, "I beg of you to leave me. What can you possibly promise yourself by this desperate boldness, after what I have told you?"

"Georgiana," he said, assuming a tone of tenderness, "you are unhappy."

"I know I am: is that any novelty among our helpless sex?"

"And you are wedded to one who—"

"Heavens! my lord, what would you say? How few women, from the highest to the lowest, are married to their hearts' wish!"

"From what I can learn the present illness of Sir Archibald is a mere repetition of those fits which may keep you lingering over him, partly as his sick-nurse and partly as the endurer of his humours, until the blessed years of your youth shall have wasted themselves in sickening depression and confinement; and that love for which you were born, and which is the strongest feeling of your nature, shall burst the swelling heart in which you would in vain stifle it."

I looked forth as he paused, and saw the lady cover her eyes with her long plump fingers, and while lean-

ing her head upon her naked arm, her breast heaved with deep emotion.

"Lady, listen to me," continued the other voice eagerly; "you talk of there being little novelty in your circumstances; but point me out among all whom you know in society any one of half your beauty so wretchedly situated; and would there, let me ask, be, even in the eyes of the world, any novelty in a young and lovely woman breaking through the trammels that others forced upon her at an age when she was unable to judge of the imperative requirements of her own heart,—and abandoning age, imbecility, and jealous impotence for congeniality—happiness—joy such as I—I, Georgiana, who adore you, could bestow—and *will* bestow—will confer and lead you to, throughout every moment of my future life, and with every advantage of my birth and my fortune—seek for that contentment which in present circumstances you can never taste. Lady, think—consent—will you?—this moment is mine—this opportunity, that I have bought with so many nights' watching, is ours—put yourself under my protection—despise the babble of nine short days at home while you and I shall be abroad enjoying life and love—Georgiana! speak! are you mine? I will devote my existence to you!"

The lady slowly raised her head and let her white arm droop from her face as she fixed her eyes on the speaker. The pause was like the breathless instant that precedes the flash of the tube which deprives some being of existence. By heaven, I was unable to resist my anxiety to assure myself regarding the other, and taking half a step forward I saw the eager half-foreign countenance of that stranger whom my curiosity had followed from the hour of my arrival in England, gazing with an ardour that was almost terrible in the beauteous face of the lady.

"Now," said she, calmly; "now I have heard you out—now I know all—now I see all that the dread vista of futurity presents, should I listen to your audacious proposal—Go, my lord! Go!—Leave me I say—I

will not hear you! Not a word further will I listen to. Go! else I will call up the servants;" and as she rose I retreated a few steps outside the door.

"Does not the world, as you say, already call you guilty?" I heard the other say, "and does not even your jealous husband believe it and upbraid you concerning me?"

"Yes, and I deserve it; but I have another to answer to—I have my own conscience to satisfy. Now leave me, my lord," she added, entreatingly; and now thinking that this strange scene was about to be terminated, I hastily, and on tiptoe, traversed the corridor, and again stood at the head of the stairs.

All was again dark around, but I had no sooner got to the staircase, while the stranger within still held a low-toned altercation with the lady, unwilling, as it appeared, to abandon his object, than a smell of fire crossed my sense, as if ascending from below. I slipped again softly down to the first landing-place, and now the smell became decidedly sensible. Recollecting the tipsy state of the nurse, I stood once more at the door of the sick man's chamber. A strong light gleamed at the foot of the door, which was now shut. A rapid suspicion again aroused my feelings, and braving every personal consideration, I turned the handle of the chamber-door and walked in. I soon saw what had given rise to my suspicions.

The careless beldam was sitting at a table by the window sound asleep; the top of her muslin cap burnt completely off, having been consumed by the flame of the candle over which she nodded, and the ignition of the cap and shawl having now communicated with the window-curtain, the latter was rapidly burning towards the drapery above.

I saw that without aid the fire would instantly communicate to the bed in which the sick man lay now also fast asleep, and, in short, that in five minutes more the room would be in flames. As I ran towards the window, and, drawing aside the further curtain which was not yet ignited, perceived that the shutters were not closed,

a sudden thought struck me regarding the termination of this adventure. Heaven help us, but man is a selfish animal, for in another instant my own awkward predicament came so home upon myself, that I resolved to risk the burning of the mansion, and all other consequences, for the chance now afforded me of getting unobserved out of the house.

Pulling away the unconscious old woman, who was drunk asleep, as well as some other baggage from near the window, I witnessed the flames spreading, without in the mean time giving any alarm; and retreating towards the door, which I shut as I went out, to prevent the draft of air, and then descending the great stair, going to the entrance, I lifted the end of the heavy chain and thundered violently at the hall-door.

The sound of my unexpected noise had not died away within the mansion, when I heard a scream above-stairs, and light footsteps come hastily forth; but the lady seemed to have fainted, for the sounds ceased, and in an instant after I heard the wires move by the walls through the lobbies, and a bell ring violently below.

Again I thundered at the door, and in a few moments after the servant, whose duty it appeared to have been to sit up, came from his lurking-place in great terror, and passing me while I again stood concealed behind the pillar, I observed him take the key from his pocket, and, to my great relief, proceed to open the door. Looking out and seeing no one, he stepped forth as I had calculated, to ascertain who raised this alarm. The street was silent and deserted, but in his terror he crossed the way while I slipped out, and going up to him, exclaimed in his ear, "Are you mad? Do you not see that your house is on fire?" at the same time pointing up to the blazing window. "The whole inmates might have been burnt to death," I added, "had I not most fortunately observed it in passing and given the alarm by knocking at the door. Hasten to the apartments, and I will be here to call assistance."

The fellow ran back in terror, and was soon joined by some of the other servants, but I was not at all dis-

posed to trust myself again inside, and waited without to observe the result and be ready to give any exterior assistance. I could observe that there was not a little bustle and alarm in the mansion, but at length it died away, and with the burning of the window-curtains the whole actual damage seemed to have terminated, excepting what might have been the effects of the accident upon the invalid gentleman, whom I now knew to be the same I had seen at Dover, and whose screams I could plainly hear as I stood in the street amid the confused noise within the house.

Before finally retreating I went once more up to the door to observe the number on it, when it was cautiously opened by the same servant, and the cloaked figure of the aristocratic stranger issued forth. The very sight of this remarkable being had such an effect on me that on perceiving him I had not the power to move.

"This is the gentleman, your lordship," said the servant, to my astonishment, as he pointed to me, "who saved the house by giving the alarm without."

"Ha—is it so?" said the former, appearing to know me; but after one start of animation his features relaxed into the same cold haughty smile that I had at first observed, as if chagrin and disappointment had sat on it, his large eyes appearing incapable of shooting that lightning of passion which I had been the witness of in the boudoir above. He passed on, however, turned the corner of a street, and before I had completely recovered my surprise or was able to use my legs with effect, he had entirely vanished from my sight.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN I found myself fairly in the street, after the termination of this adventure, it had still such an effect upon me that I could scarcely believe that I was really quite alone, and delivered from the shame of which I had so long felt the painful apprehension. I therefore pushed my way on from street to street, as I thought, homewards, as if some one was rapidly chasing me, and several times looked over my shoulder to see if the personage who had so long excited my curiosity was not actually dodging my steps. Meeting, however, with no one, excepting here and there a solitary watchman,—for we in England were then under the old watchmen regime,—and perceiving, behind and before, a clear street, without a sound disturbing the silence, I began to pace slower, and to suffer the current of my own reflections upon all that I had witnessed.

The image of a man—any man—is in general easily dismissed from another man's fancy, but that of a woman, a beautiful woman, is much more adhesive; particularly to the imagination of a thoughtful and sober-minded stranger, cast by chance into the ocean of human beings, which ebbs and flows through the complex receptacles of a great capital. And yet I did not think of the lady I had seen with any other sentiment than the natural interest we all feel in the fate of a fascinating and high-minded woman, placed in circumstances in which she neither could give nor receive the pleasure for which, in person and mind, she was eminently fitted; and now, in consequence, and by the arts of another, tottering on the brink of ruin.

The interest I had at first felt about the strange man was now turned into suspicion, and almost abhorrence; and should the lady not have the strength of mind to persist in her exclusion of him, or in any degree give

way to his further attempts upon her virtue, I saw reserved for her in the dim vista of the future, misery and degradation, such as saddened me to think of.

As I mused concerning this lady, however, by the natural scene-shiftings of fancy, and the affinities of association, another image of female beauty was presented to my mind, namely, of that sweet innocent face which I had so frequently had opportunities of contemplating, as it passed me like the fleeting dream of an angel, during my solitary rambles among the well-dressed crowds of this Babel of the west. Beauty—thoughtless, or perhaps pensive beauty,—I speak of the unconscious possessor,—how seldom is the young and joyous heart of its wearer aware of the number of its secret but sensitive worshippers, as, gliding past, like regretful ghosts, even while they walk the busy streets, its keen glances are darted into their inmost souls, and are afterward dwelt upon, in fancy, as the precious lightning of the gods, which shooteth down from heaven, to give a golden lustre and a bright radiance to the heavy clouds of existence! These touching looks of female loveliness, how they linger upon the recollection of the solitary bachelor, as he sighs over the imagination of joys which he cannot taste, until he lays his head at night on his cold dull pillow; or as, for want of better occupation, he wanders, as I did, at three in the morning, a restless stranger in the streets of the metropolis, looking out for questionable midnight adventures, like the discontented spirit of prowling observation, which glares in at the murky corners of city crime, and “vanishes at crowing of the cock.”

I was aroused from these thoughts by the noise of tongues, which suddenly disturbed the narrow street into which I had now strolled, and looking up and around, observed that I had wandered far from my home, and got almost into the city. I hastened forward, however, towards where the noise came from (for night-wandering gentlemen need not attempt to be very select in their society at such hours), and soon my sentimental cogitations were dissipated by a scene which, however

new to me then, is no rarity in the streets of London. I observed two men, having the appearance of gentlemen, engaged together in an angry quarrel, and abusing each other with excellent drunken vigour. The dispute seemed ready to end in blows, but having been put on my guard as a stranger, against midnight affrays in the metropolis, I kept aloof for a minute or two, until I observed the taller man of the two, after calling the other several different sorts of scoundrels, collar him with both hands and shake him violently. Giving way to my feelings, I now drew near, and begged of the strange man to desist, when partly letting go the other, he turned his wrath upon me, and, as I now determinedly interfered, he struck at me with his freed hand. The blow was returned—the shorter man struggled, and also sparred, and a round engagement of fisticuffs was soon the consequence of this gentlemanly business.

Had I been an Irishman, nothing could have been more gratifying than this affair, for all the watchmen near were comfortably asleep, the coast was perfectly clear, and we being, as I soon found out, all personal acquaintances, fought with the more good-will. The only thing unpleasant was, that the little man, who, on his hat being knocked off, I found, by the bald patch on his crown, to be no other than my friend Compton, and whose sight was mystified by the liquor he had taken, as soon as he got free of the grasp of his antagonist, dealt his blows on me, and thus the engagement became of a general and rather promiscuous nature.

Sobriety, however, was the better part of my valour, with reference to the others, and having at length succeeded at least in scattering my opponents, the taller man then started off down the street, and we two who remained began to look at each other, and to take breath.

"Bless my conscience!" cried Compton—looking closely in my face; for my excellent new acquaintance always swore by a quality which he scarcely even professed to possess, "can it possibly be you?—and how well you *did* deal about you. I am amazed, sir—I am charmed with you! And to be in the streets

of London at this hour in the morning, and so ready to join in an honest quarrel! You are converted, sir—you are civilized—you are *homo elegantiarum*. You deserve to be presented with the freedom of the city."

In this way the man's tongue ran on, complimenting me in language of drunken absurdity for the very things of which I was heartily ashamed; and indeed his gratitude for my interference in his favour was so great, that I could hardly persuade him to move from the spot.

By this time the hour was too unseasonable for us to attempt to get into our lodgings, and my companion, knowing the town well, dragged me towards Covent Garden, in some of the hotels round which he proposed we should sleep. When we got, however, under the piazzas, and I thought to end this low-lived scene by housing my companion in an inn where we saw a light still burning, as he groped for the bell at the door a fit of drunken obstinacy came over him, and, nill ye will ye, he would not enter.

"I tell you what, Mr. Thingumback," he again was pleased to say, "I've quite a new opinion of you after your gentlemanly conduct this night. I'll take you into my favour, sir; I'll patronise you, and by G— you shan't go home until I show you something more of London. Nay, no excuses—no arguments. I'm a lawyer, and can tell you the value of an argument to sixpence. Besides, you can put it all in your book—ha, ha, ha! Come; for I have got something to say to you, if you can attend to it.—Heavens, how drunk you are!" he added, with the usual penetration of more sober persons upon the subject of their own faults, as he looked up muddily in my face.

It was in vain that I refused or insisted; and he speedily brought me to some place near, which is kept open all night, and which has, I believe, been already described oftener than requisite. I saw, however, little that was remarkable in the house, except a young man of exceedingly respectable appearance asleep on his seat in one of the boxes below. Being placed by ourselves in an upper room, the lawyer, looking steadily in my

face, and complimenting his own penetration in having discovered so sensible and tractable a person as myself, began to talk to me with extraordinary distinctness and consistency. Having determined to give me his confidence, his tale, to my astonishment, was regarding a young gentlewoman, whom he described with such enthusiasm of gross admiration, and in such terms, as led me unconsciously to collate all he said with the beautiful female whom my eyes had so often followed when she appeared in public, but whom I had of late looked out for in vain.

"But what," said I, "is all this to you? What is your meaning with regard to the lady?"

"The fact is," said he, "I am tired of boarding-houses and bachelorism, particularly as I can now afford to buy a wife."

"To buy a wife!" exclaimed I, repeating his vile expression; "what do you mean with reference to a girl such as you describe?"

"I mean exactly as I say—because I choose to speak plain language. May not any thing be bought in England?—and have not I money to purchase beauty?" he added, clapping his hand on his breeches-pocket. "Ay, a heavy purse is a loadstone so powerful, that hang it up between heaven and earth, as the Catholic priests do, and it will draw you upwards and open to you gates unspeakable, after you have purchased here below all that the world offers to the best bidder."

I stared a moment in the face of my coarse companion, as I reflected on what he said—for even truth itself is disgusting when too broadly spoken—and then said simply,

"But the girl's affections?"

"Are upon me!"

I again glanced over those maudlin salacious gray eyes, and that tinged nose, which had always repelled me, and felt most uncomfortable.

"I tell you they are upon *me*—that is, they are and must be upon dress and equipage, and the means of

creating envy ; and am not I, with my purse, the representative of all these ?”

“ And has the lady consented ?”

“ I never asked her.”

“ But her father ?”

“ If he does not I have a lawyer’s alternative—I’ll ruin him ! I’ve lent him money.”

“ And do you call this English manners and proceedings ?”

“ Certainly—at least with wise people—and the English are getting wiser every day. Now you may put that in your book if you like—ha, ha, ha !”

I again looked at the man, and then gave a glance round the mean apartment. I never in my existence felt so humbled as I did at this moment, to think that I was making myself a companion of such a wretch, and in a place which I am now ashamed to think of. How dear-bought is that thing which we call knowledge of the world ! A thought, however, struck me at the moment, that I might be useful to some one in reference to this business, and I determined to persevere in my inquiries.

Whether during the pause, however, Compton had begun to suspect me I hardly can judge ; but what little additional I could get out of him after this went to convince me that he had some strange schemes on hand, which were intended to ruin the happiness of some amiable family, whom he judged of only by his own gross conceptions ; and, absurd as the notion seemed, I could not without entirely divest myself of a distant suspicion that possibly the whole might have reference to her whose simple beauty had so dwelt upon my fancy since I had become a wandering stranger in London.

Becoming exceedingly uneasy in the company of my neighbour, and perceiving that sleep began to overpower him, I was now enabled to persuade him to adjourn to the hotel. The day, as we again emerged into the open air, was beginning to break, and to my surprise, Covent Garden was already crowded with its early frequenters from the country, who, with numerous carts filled with

all manner of fruits and kitchen-stuffs, caused a species of bustle that had a peculiar effect to a stranger. My mind, however, was scarcely in a humour to observe it, and succeeding in getting into the inn, I at length, weary and jaded, retired to my apartment. Thus ended the adventures of this, to me, memorable night.

CHAPTER V.

THE tedium and vulgarity of the street and tavern adventures of the previous night were positively worth submitting to for the sake of the consequences to which they led, and particularly of the look of incredulous astonishment which Compton put on, at our late breakfast on the following morning, upon my repeating what he had told me regarding his scheme of marriage, disclosed to me in his cups. He had no previous conception that the old proverb *in vino veritas* had any application to so guarded a fox as himself, neither had he the slightest recollection of the latter part of the evening's transactions.

Craft begets craft, at least it ought to do so, for that is the only way that its crooked plans are to be fitly met—so, pretending to know more than Compton had actually told me, he was obliged, as we continued to converse, to give me almost his entire confidence. I did not, however, in return give him mine; for though I suspected, from former hints, that he must have known the strange nobleman who had so oddly interested me, taking my cue from himself, I drank in every thing that my ears could catch from him, but determined to say nothing in return until I saw proper time. Meanwhile he began to affect to treat me with the highest confidence, which I easily discerned was only the consequence of his having already trusted me further than he intended; but as I saw as well as himself that a third person would be

useful to him in these matters, on his proposing to me to take upon myself that responsible office, influenced by a newly-excited curiosity, I positively refused, unless he was disposed directly to introduce me to the lady whose hand he sought, and also to her father, concerning whom he entertained the benevolent intentions let out on the previous night.

I did not entirely like his answers to me on this point, but made no reply, until a letter he found waiting for him at our lodgings on our return thither seemed to give him new light; and brightening up when he had read it, he said, with his usual triumphant yet freezing chuckle, "Ha! this is lucky—times are changed with the Fortesques when they are obliged to come to me. In five minutes," he added, taking out his watch, "her father will be here."

"Well," said I, "and what of that?"

"Nothing—but that you seemed to take an interest in the lady. Hark! *there* is an aristocratic knock for you. 'Tis he, I'm certain."

I walked to the window, and in two minutes saw a tall elderly gentleman descend from a plain green carriage. The door of it was not shut after him. A delicate female figure next stepped out of it, and what was my astonishment, when, in spite of veils and cloaks, I was able to recognise the perfect profile of the beautiful creature whom I had so long followed with my eyes through the public places of the metropolis. On Mr. Fortesque being announced, Compton went to receive the father and daughter in another room. I heard the light foot of the latter trip along the passage beside me. I could have burst through the wall to get near them, so much had the whole circumstance excited my feelings.

Through my own half-opened door, I at first heard loud and angry talk between the gentlemen. Afterward the sound of the stranger's voice sunk into subdued and low murmurings; but when the clear soft tones of a female struck upon my ear, as if she spoke in expostulating and petitioning language, I was unable to contain my feelings, and starting out into the passage,

and opening the door of a small room next to theirs, I went in to catch, if possible, some portion of their conversation. Eaves-dropping and what I was now about are not the same things. To my joy I found a small door within a recess, which appeared to have been nailed up, but the upper part of which was of green glass and covered with a light screen. Removing the screen a little, I found myself almost behind the parties, and had a tolerably distinct view of them.

"And do you really refuse me this small sum, sir?" I heard Mr. Fortesque say, casting a glance of mixed scorn and entreaty upon Compton, who stood between the old gentleman and his daughter with a nonchalance that was to me perfectly astonishing. "By heavens!" continued the petitioning father, "this last misfortune will drive me distracted! My house—the domestic hearth of my father's son—to be profaned by the vile executioners of the law, and all for less than a thousand pounds. My God! and you, too, to desert me!"

"I assure you I am exceedingly sorry, sir—*exceedingly* sorry—but these things *will* happen, and do happen every day."

"Ah, sir," said the afflicted girl, looking up to the inexorable money-trader with an expression of agony in her countenance which almost took the heart out of my body merely to witness it, "can you see my poor father thus situated, after all that has passed, and not do this for him? I thought when I accompanied him to you this sad morning, that you would surely do it *for me* at least. Oh, sir, will you,—will you, Mr. Compton?"—and the poor girl rose up and clasped her hands together in her intense agitation.

The contrast between the two faces was to me so appalling, while witnessing this sensual representative of Mammon and the Satyr gloating over that lovely countenance, as with eyes now streaming in tears the wretched girl continued to gaze upon his bloated face, that I could with difficulty refrain from bursting into the room, to be myself her friend, or at least her advocate.

The smile with which he regarded her was to me

worse than all, as he said, addressing her, "Perhaps—*perhaps* I may be able to find the money, since *you* thus plead for it," and leaving her, he stepped forward, and, with sly deliberation, whispered something in the ear of her father.

The start and the succeeding look which followed the proposal to the distracted victim of ruin, I will not attempt to describe; a hectic laugh was the first audible explosion of his feelings, and, after a few more words, the old gentleman again said aloud—

"Say no more, sir; I see what it has come to with me. Leave me for a moment, and I will at once make the matter known to my daughter."

Compton left the room, and I wished myself anywhere rather than to be witness of what I knew was to come between the father and his child; but interest in the whole riveted me to the spot, and I bolted the door of the room in which I was, that I might not be disturbed, and then stood again at my window to observe them.

"Matilda," I heard the pale old man say, after a pause, "a proposal has just been made to me that involves your future destiny, and the remaining fortune of my family. It is one which I should not even name to you in ordinary circumstances, but it arises naturally out of the unfortunate situation in which we are placed, and is only the last of a series of troubles; for, as the wheel of fortune is continually turning round, bringing one man up, and—"

"My dear father," said the anxious girl, "name the proposal."

"You know the man who has just left us, and how we are situated; can you not guess the purport of his whisper about you?"

"Is it possible, my father, that you could think of my being married to—to—"

"Matilda, my love, I do not think of it—I cannot—"

"Father, will it save you?"

"It will; but do not let me press it, my child, against your youthful feelings; although I should be driven to

any act of desperation for the present—I will go and humble myself before him whom I—”

“I *will* do what you wish—I will do any thing; but, oh, my God, the wife of Compton!” and stifling her grief for a moment, she at length threw herself weeping into the old man’s arms.

I was unable to bear the sobbings of both, and rushing out of the room in which I had been observing them, I encountered the money-lender in the passage.

“Where have you fled to?” said he, “I wanted to see you.”

“What is that you have in your hand?”

“It is a contract—a missive contract of *marriage*!” he whispered triumphantly, “of *my* marriage into one of the oldest families in the kingdom; but I have bought it somewhat dear though. Come, you shall see the bride,” and before I could reply, I found myself hurried forward by the arm into the room and the presence of the distressed gentleman and his daughter.

Matilda Fortesque started on seeing me, for my face was not unknown to her, our eyes having frequently met before; but unable to divine in what character I now so unexpectedly stood in her presence at this painful crisis, she turned away and moved towards the window.

After a formal introduction of me to the old gentleman, Compton and he spoke a few words apart, while I was unconsciously regarding only the sorrowful features of Matilda. Perceiving at once the awkwardness of the situation in which the boisterous forwardness of Compton and my own feelings had placed me, I was only prevented from instantly apologizing and withdrawing by the hope of some opportunity of defeating the plans of the lawyer, without appearing a meddler in matters of such extreme delicacy.

“Is my word not sufficient, sir?” said Mr. Fortesque now, aloud.

“It is usual in matters of business to have some little writing in a case so important. You can’t ex-

pect that I should advance another thousand pounds without—" and he offered the missive.

"Shall you not have my bond for it?"

"But there is the contract to—"

"I will give my promise and consent in the presence of your friend, should my daughter be agreeable, you also undertaking to—"

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said I; "I perceive there are matters between you to which I cannot, in honour and right feeling, be witness, unless they be perfectly voluntary on all sides."

The lady started from a reverie as I uttered this, as if a sudden hope had crossed her mind, while the old gentleman threw a penetrating look towards me, which I endeavoured to return in such a way as to convey a particular suggestion to his mind. Adversity is keen of perception. Mr. Fortesque understood me, or at least seemed to do so, and I at once determined to hazard a remark founded upon what I had formerly overheard.

"I think," said I, "you talked something of a thousand pounds. If it is a common transaction arising out of Mr. Compton's profession, I will be witness to the signing of a bond or a receipt; but if there is any condition attached to the transfer of the money, to which the receiver gives an unwilling consent, you will please excuse my being present to hear it. Besides," I added, as Compton looked aghast, wondering what I was about to say next,—*"money is not so scarce a commodity in England, that for so paltry a sum as a thousand pounds, a man who has property, and is only in a temporary difficulty, must be saddled with conditions which, for aught I know, may be painful to his feelings."*

"Alas!" said the old gentleman mournfully, "you speak, young sir, like one that never has known adversity."

"I know this much, sir," I replied, suiting my style to the state of his thoughts, "that the adversity you seem to allude to *may* and *will* pass away; but, in cases of this nature, there are other evils which may

arise from our own act, hastily performed under the impatience of adversity, for which time itself offers no remedy, and which even the mammon of the world's worship, when obtained, totally fails to alleviate."

The old gentleman placed his hand over his eyes when I had said this, and laid his head back on his chair in deep thought.

"You are mighty officious, I think, sir," said Compton, looking hard at me, on perceiving the impression I had made. "I have known many a man make a fine speech who could not raise a thousand pounds at a pinch."

"One of the bitterest feelings raised by adversity," said Mr. Fortesque, with a rising scorn, as he now looked at the lawyer, "is to hear small matters when urgently sought for magnified into mountains. How little I would have thought of a sum like this ten years ago!"

"'Tis a trifle not to be mentioned," said I, humouring the proud feeling of the old gentleman; "and if *I* may have the honour of being your agent, I will undertake to produce the sum within one hour, and that without any condition whatever beyond what business requires."

"By heaven you shall not!" exclaimed the money-broker, with true tradesman jealousy of me, and thumping the table as he spoke. "I'll show Mr. Fortesque that I'll deal with him as liberally as any man;" and, taking out his bank-book, he instantly, without further stipulation, drew a draft for the required sum, and presented it to the astonished father of Matilda. "Now, sir," said he, "that shows you what *I* am—and I trust that *my* liberality of dealing will not end with the mere signing of the bond for this, but will be appreciated in the quarter on which I have set my heart," and he accompanied the last words with a most complacent bow to Matilda.

"How little do we know of people's circumstances and feelings by merely seeing them in public!" I thought, as I first heard of the distress of this amiable family. "What a charming thing is joy on the countenances of

the high-minded and the intelligent, when it comes suddenly after despondency and humiliation !” What I now witnessed, particularly in the transparent face of that heavenly creature, whom my eyes had so long followed, was what no words can ever express. And her beaming and modest glance towards myself had so much grateful feeling in it—and so much that seemed to say, “God bless you, youth, for your favourable interference at such a moment as this !” and which plainly spoke the words, “I could wish that we might meet again where we could speak to each other ;” that I almost regretted that the paltry thousand pounds had not come out of my own pocket, for it would by no means have paid for this exquisite moment.

I could not, however, help admiring the tact of the old gentleman, when, squeezing my hand as we rose to separate, he thus addressed me :—

“I perceive, sir,” said he, “that, though young, you are acquainted with business, which I unfortunately am not, a defect which has been the ruin of many other men, who once, like me, possessed a good fortune. And though Mr. Compton here has been frequently useful to me, yet as opposition in these matters is, I am told, productive of excellent effects, should you do me the favour of calling upon me, I shall not scruple to avail myself of your advice.”

I assured Mr. Fortesque, that though professionally I was unconnected with any business, I should nevertheless be most happy if at any time in future I could render him the least service.

My habits as a stranger had made me a reader of faces, and as I turned towards Matilda, while with an evidently full heart she shook her father’s hand—I could see as plain in her gleaming eyes as if the words had been written on them that she would say—“How strange are the ways of Providence ! that sometimes raises us up a friend, and opens a new spring of hope, at the very last instant of gathering adversity !”

I saw, also, by her grateful glance towards me, or at least I flattered myself, that there was a stronger senti-

ment mixed with this.—I could not be mistaken, and as soon as I had seen the father and daughter to their carriage, I hastened away from the house, lest the babble of the coarse lawyer should interrupt the delightful current of my feelings.

CHAPTER VI.

THE world was now a new world to me. I no longer wandered the streets of London with that cheerless feeling of solitary individuality which had hitherto oppressed me. England, or rather Europe, was to me no longer a wide sea of busy human beings, into which I had been dropped as if from the clouds, and among which I was a lost atom of mind, unknowing, unregarded, and unknown. Now I possessed the delightful consciousness of being useful to another human being besides myself. I had been looked upon with an eye of interest and of favour, by one of the virtuous hearts, who after all are frequently to be found on the earth's surface, looking eagerly around them for that communion of congenial spirits which is the very life of their life; and towards this amiable being my heart burned within me, in proportion to the repulsiveness with which I regarded others with whom I could have no sympathy.

All this time, that is, for several days after the meeting with the Fortesques, I had never had a sight of him I called the strange gentleman, nor did I now think of him with any interest, my curiosity being pretty well gratified by the extraordinary scene I had witnessed in the mansion. In my hurry that evening I had omitted to observe the name of the street where the house was situated, and it having occurred to me one day to endeavour to find it out, I tried in vain among the labyrinth of builded sameness in the west to obtain the least trace of it. On ruminating over that affair now, the

that I could almost have dreamt, had it not been for other respects respecting the stranger nobleman, and that I was yet far from being entirely

At this time that I should perform my duty, calling upon Mr. Fortesque, I went to the house which he had given me his address. In looking for the number of his house I happened to cast my eyes across the street; what was my astonishment to observe the tall portly figure of the strange gentleman, walking leisurely opposite to the very door I was seeking, and casting an occasional glance up towards the windows. My heart rose in my bosom at this sight with a strange sensation of mixed indignation and jealousy. I passed the door at first, then returned to observe his motions. He walked back also the contrary way, gazed up again, and then shot a dark inquisitive look across towards me. I went up the steps of Mr. Fortesque's door, and knocked boldly; the strange man seemed astonished, passed on, and I was ushered into the house.

I was received by the old gentleman, and afterward by Matilda and her mother, with that welcome expression appearing in the eyes and in the very tones of the voice, which is so much above the fictitious phrases of common ceremony, and tells of feelings towards those to whom we are irresistibly drawn, which are very unnecessary to describe by words. When I had mentioned some particulars regarding myself and of my connexions abroad, few of them as still remained alive, the old gentleman knew one of them well; we became more unreserved, and he communicated to me several matters regarding his affairs and in reference to his transactions with Compton and others, to which I listened with the deepest interest.

"Your remarks, sir," he said in the course of conversation, "appear to me so judicious that I will intrust you with another matter in which I am painfully interested, and regarding which, as you are more abroad in the

world than I of late am disposed to be, and being much of a stranger you are not inveigled into the coteries of ordinary scandal, you, perhaps, may be enabled to render me some service. You must know that I have a niece,—alas! that I should have to mention her name with blame and regret—for the lively daughter of my poor deceased brother was beautiful and fascinating even from a child; but what will a declining family not do to retrieve its ruined fortunes? In short, my warm-hearted favourite was influenced—she was more than influenced—into a most uncongenial and ill-suited marriage. What shall I add? How can high spirit and enthusiastic energy abide mental imbecility and the sour watchfulness of a narrow mind?—and in a world where the longings of the heart are so hard to gratify, even with all the means and appliances of the most favourable circumstances, how can it be patient without one feeling answered, or one pulse beating in unison with the one to whom it is associated for life? We every day hear of legal prostitutions—these are hard words, but although few men have known what it is to be obliged to set a value upon money more than myself, I can never approve of sacrificing to worldly considerations those deep feelings of the ardent mind which, if choked and stifled in warm youth, or worn down into melancholy apathy during the sad tedium of inward suffering without hope, leave the heart in old age a withered and blasted thing, brooding with regret over a weary existence, and with blanched cheek and saddened eye supporting a burdensome pomp only to convey it to a thankless posterity.”

As the old man paused in his serious communication, I wondered what all this was to lead to. After a few moments he again resumed.

“It is an old fashion of the world to sacrifice every thing in the shape of feeling or inclination to worldly advantages and fancied greatness. Undoubtedly these have their value, in their right place; but, after all, happiness and they are distinct things, and it is only vulgar and gross minds which have no just apprehension of the latter, who, at the expense of all that is dear to the

human heart, would teach sensitive minds to seek the former as the *summum bonum* of life. When I was consulted about the marriage of Georgiana, it was in vain that I urged these things, and prophesied evil should my advice be disregarded. Even my niece herself was not arrived at the years to have any just conception of life or any understanding of her own feelings—not as yet, indeed, half-developed,—dazzled as usual with promised splendour, and worried into consent by the false representations of worldly persons, gave way, and I, the unwelcome adviser against such temptations, and the hated prophet of evil, have, I fear, been sadly in the right, if the reports that have reached me have any foundation in truth.”

“What reports, sir?” said I, unconsciously, and almost with a start.

“Have *you* heard them too?” said he, sharply.

“I cannot satisfy you, sir,” I said, “until I hear more fully what you allude to.”

“It is regarding the truth of these very reports,” he went on, “that I want, if possible, some authentic information. The eccentric baronet and she went to live abroad, on account of the wretched state of his health; they have of late returned, and have brought with them such a composition of strange accounts and mysterious scandal, as I never thought to have heard attached to any connexion of mine.”

“But there must be some male person in the case, to whom these reports must also have allusion.”

“There is; and that is the principal point of the mystery. A strange gentleman has been lately seen in town, to whom some say these rumours bear allusion; but though a personage whom many have remarked, no one, that I have heard of, can tell any thing concerning him, excepting that he is a man who lives splendidly, and has been more than once seen, when abroad at least, with my unfortunate niece. Nay, more, there is a peculiar-looking, but certainly elegant man, has been following with his eyes, on several occasions, my own daughter, and some fancy has taken her and her mother

that he must be the same person which these reports refer to. We have even seen him this very morning pacing more than once before the windows in the street, and from the oddness of the circumstance we are more concerned about him than even about the repulsive urgency of Mr. Compton."

"Of Mr. Compton!" I repeated in additional surprise.

"Yes," added Mr. Fortesque; "presuming upon the circumstances in which I unfortunately am placed with him, his urgency for the hand of my daughter is perfectly torturing, almost menacing; and you may conceive how distressing the idea of such a match, could it possibly be forced on us, must be to me after the painful example of my unhappy niece. I reveal to you these things, sir," said he, "notwithstanding the shortness of our acquaintance, because I think that, stranger as you are, I can rely upon your honour as well as judgment, and because from your judicious interference when we first met, I feel no degradation in being indebted to you for that peculiar service which a third party can sometimes render in our respective circumstances."

I was delighted of course to be thus treated, but did not at all see my way clearly in respect to the information which I was expected to obtain. I was still more gratified by the further conversation I had with Mrs. Fortesque and with Matilda herself, whose beauty I will not now dwell upon, and whose soft looks and delicate sentiments sank deeply into my heart. I at length left the society of that amiable family, my whole being renovated by that glowing sentiment which gives poor human nature a taste of the joy of the gods, and makes this nether world another heaven. As I again walked the crowded streets of London, I experienced, almost with triumph, that delightful feeling so long a stranger to my bosom, that now I existed in this world not entirely for myself.

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CHAPTER VII. .

"WHAT do you think?" said Compton to me one day shortly after this. "I am refused by old Fortesque, on the part of his daughter, because, forsooth, my fortune is not sufficient, and the doting spendthrift himself hardly now worth a shilling. But I'll have her! the girl shall be mine! if I should compass heaven and earth for her! She shall lie in these arms if—ay, in these very arms!—Oh, isn't she a lovely creature!"

The very thought—the bare fancy—as I looked at the bloated and sordid wretch, thus stretching out his arms before me, almost turned me sick.

"But what have you been engaged in for the last fortnight?" I inquired; "I have scarcely seen you?"

"What the devil is there about you, Eisenbach," said he, "that induces me to make you my confidant? I will tell you—but surely you cannot mean to attempt to rival me with Matilda Fortesque! No, no! you cannot. You have not got the *geldt*! at least not to the amount that *I* have;" and as he spoke, he clapped his hand significantly on his breeches-pocket, and looked at me with that triumph with which, in England, a rich man glories over those whom he considers poor.

Scorning to be offended by the coarse freedom of this man, I made no reply, while he went on.

"What I am worth now is but a trifle to what I shall soon be possessed of, and then—Matilda!—I shall keep three carriages!—I shall get into parliament!—I shall—"

"But why," said I, interrupting this vulgar rhapsody, "should you, with all this wealth, think of marrying the daughter of a ruined gentleman, who can bring you nothing?"

"Ha! you are raw. You know not what I know of the connexions of the Fortesques, and their ultimate

expectations. But I shall have power over them in the mean time at least. Come, will you accompany me this morning on the crowning business, and I will tell you all that is necessary by the way?"

A hackney-coach already stood at the door; and, wondering where he was going to take me, I stepped in. A stripling, who acted as his clerk, being also in attendance, came next into the coach with a bag of papers, intended, along with myself, as a witness of some contemplated transaction, and off we drove in silence. On the way he became thoughtful, as if he already repented of his confidence; talked of my being a stranger in London—of the honesty of the German character, &c.—and without giving me any insight into his plans, simply begged that I would consider him my friend, and be his, in reference to this matter—should I require to be called on before leaving England.

"What can you possibly mean?" I inquired.

"You have been my legal friend before," he said, "and on that occasion you rather disappointed me; now I give you an opportunity of doing otherwise. He to whose house we are going is rather eccentric and strange, but he is perfectly collected. You will see that, and if you see any thing that looks like the contrary, you are not to mind it. You will find him, though weak, perfectly *compos mentis*. I have long been his lawyer, and am of late his particular friend."

We stopped at the door of a large mansion; something struck me on my entrance into the hall that I had seen it before. What was my astonishment, as I mounted the stairs, to find myself in the same house into which I had been locked that, to me, remarkable night. I determined to ask no questions of my companion. We were at first ushered into a drawing-room furnished in the richest style of English luxury, and soon after the lawyer was called out, leaving me to my own reflections.

Whatever might be Compton's business in this house, I perceived that in respect to Matilda, now the great object of my thoughts, and whom I had since met with

several times, he was making the usual mistake of worldly men, in supposing that what they have amassed by much care and some dishonesty is as all-powerful and highly valued in the view of those who have but little of it as it is by themselves; and thus he never dreamed that Matilda's father or herself would ultimately refuse him, far less that he could possibly be supplanted by such as I;—or, in short, that any other advantage of mind or person could weigh any thing in the balance against the power of wealth. As I thus cogitated Compton re-entered the room.

"I have brought you here," he said, "merely to witness the signing of a will. This could, of course, be done almost by any one, but it may be necessary hereafter that proof may be required regarding the state of mind of—"

"Make no apology," said I, and with some peculiar anticipations I followed him into the chamber of the invalid.

"Sir Archibald Staines," said Compton, pointing to the same melancholy remnant of a man whom I had twice before seen—now placed in a great chair among a pile of cushions, a small table with writing materials before him, his thin face elongated with illness, and his sunken eye wandering feebly round the room.

"Now, Sir Archibald, just sign here;" and the lawyer, with a fawning manner, put a pen into the thin yellow fingers of the sick baronet.

"Hah!—am I dying then, that you make me sign my will?" said the sick, with a ghastly smile of imbecility and terror, as, baring his long teeth and opening his hollow eyes, he looked up in the lawyer's face with the very expression of the grave.

"Oh, not at all, Sir Archibald," said Compton, "you are much improved—you look remarkably well; but it is better that this should be done before you set off for Italy, you know."

"But can't I do it when I return—and then I shall be strong and well—and Lady Staines will be quite charmed—Hah! lawyer—where is Georgiana?" he

added, as if a sudden renovation of his mental powers had taken place,—“where is she?—I will not sign my will without her.” And the sick man, to Compton’s evident consternation, threw down the pen.

“It is not usual for ladies to be present on an occasion of this kind; *do*, Sir Archibald, sign at once.”

“Will no one call me Lady Staines?” persisted the nervous invalid, but with increased energy. “Where are all my servants?—where is that ugly old nurse?—Compton, you wicked lawyer, you haunt me about this will—ring the bell, I say!”

The lawyer, with a look of great chagrin, pulled the bell-rope—and as the servant came in to receive his order, I felt, I confess, most strangely at the idea of again seeing Lady Staines, and could hardly credit the chance events that had conspired to make a stranger like myself witness of these extraordinary scenes in England.

Sir Archibald relapsed for a moment into his usual apathy, while Compton seemed to determine within himself on a bold push for his object.

“Just have the goodness, sir, to sign this, if you please—”

The invalid passively took again the offered pen, as he seemed to relapse into his wandering half-insensibility.

“Sign there, sir; now, do not delay, Sir Archibald, for here is a gentleman and my clerk waiting to witness this your act and deed—”

“Mr. Compton,” said I, now coming forward, “unless your client has read over what he is to sign, and seems capable of understanding it, I must be excused from bearing witness to all this—”

On hearing a new voice, Sir Archibald now opened feebly his languid glazed eyes, and for the first time looked steadily upon me. As he gazed, his wan countenance again suddenly changed into a strangely excited expression,—and shrinking towards the corner of his chair he only uttered the exclamation—“Good heavens!”

"What is the meaning of all this?" cried Compton, in renewed alarm.

The sick baronet still gazed on me. "It was no dream—" he at length uttered in a low voice,—“it could not be a dream. You are the very man.”

"What man? what can be the meaning of this, Sir Archibald?" again exclaimed Compton, in amazement.

"Yes, it was you that gave me my drink that night," continued the bewildered baronet. "I know you, and saw you slip out of the room, just as I was wakened by the smell of fire. You were my guardian angel that fearful night, and as for Lady Staines—alas!—she—Compton, how know you this gentleman?"

At this moment the servant opened the door, and Lady Staines walked in among us. She almost started on observing me. The lawyer seemed to shrink into half his size, as she cast a look of inquisitive contempt towards him; while her noble figure and bearing, and her heroic beauty, in spite of the melancholy that seemed to sit upon her brow and the evident carelessness of her morning dress, involuntarily excited my admiration, as it did that of the enfeebled baronet, who now also looked in admiration on his wife under the unsuitable character of the husband of such a woman.

"You sent for me, Sir Archibald," she said, abruptly, yet with a look of some kindness.

"I did, Georgiana," and the invalid raised himself astonishingly. "Lawyer! why do you not hand Lady Staines a chair?"

The lawyer had Lady Staines placed on a seat, at the same time making her a profound bow.

"Georgiana," continued the baronet, as he still gazed on the lady across the small table on which lay the papers,—“say, are you my wife or not?"

An exclamation of amazement from the lady, at being thus addressed in the presence of strangers, was the natural consequence of this speech.

"Lady Staines," he continued, "I purposely address you in the presence of witnesses, if Heaven gives me strength to do so; for notwithstanding the flatteries of

that lawyer, who haunts me night and day, I feel that this may be the last time I shall be sufficiently collected to speak to you seriously. I have made a great mistake in making you my wife, and your purpose and that of your friends in this ill-advised marriage will be disappointed. Here I have made a new will, which I mean to sign, and to burn the former in your presence. Lawyer, reach me that tin box."

The bosom of the lady seemed to be swelling with emotion, but she uttered not a word, while the lawyer bustled forward the box.

"Will you not speak to me, Georgiana, before I sign away my property from the whole race of your relatives?"

"If you give it to those who are worthy of it," said the lady, mildly, "then—" and she paused.

"Where will I find them?" interrupted the invalid, with his usual peevish scream: "who is worthy? I may as well will my fortune to this painstaking lawyer as to any one else."

"Gracious heavens!" was the lady's exclamation of astonishment.

"Ay, Lady Staines—just so. The bear will at least hug and hold fast his prey, and suck his paws over it in his winter's den; and that is a recommendation to all disponners of the world's wealth—but I feel myself growing weak. Give me the pen, Compton, and open the box. I once thought *you* worthy, Georgiana," he continued; "I once thought your uncle worthy—but he is a spendthrift and a fool, that Fortesque; and I now see through his motives for urging on your marriage with me. But yet, had he sought for a reconciliation—"

"Pardon me, Sir Archibald," said I, now impelled by my feelings to speak; "Mr. Fortesque, to my knowledge, was strongly against that very marriage."

The sick man looked across to me in surprise, and then cried,—“How know you that, sir? Was that really the case, Lady Staines?”

"He certainly urged me strongly against it," she

said, her heart seeming to fill at the recollection. "My good uncle was the only one who did so, and all his prophecies have become but too true."

"You vile lawyer!" screamed the sick man, looking across upon Compton, his dim eyes kindling into the sharp flame of terrible indignation: "didn't you tell me that Fortesque was the great urger of that step for selfish motives, and that he recklessly threw away his fortune expecting that I was to replace it—and that now he stands, like the hungry grave itself, yawning for my bones, that when I am dead and buried, he may waste the substance of my forefathers in riotous living! Oh, where, where is truth on earth?"

"So far is that from the truth, Sir Archibald," said the lady, "that my poor uncle has suffered the greatest distress, brought on by pure misfortune, and much by the craft of this very lawyer, and was too proud to let you know it fully, even when he applied to you."

The sick man's mind seemed more and more aroused by astonishment at the manner in which he had been deceived.

"I was witness of his deep distress," said I, "when, accompanied by his daughter, he went to borrow money of Mr. Compton; and I have since been witness of the high honour and just pride of that interesting family."

"Went to borrow money of this man!" exclaimed the lady; "my sweet cousin so degrading herself! and this man not to inform me of it—while he was poisoning your ear, Sir Archibald! Wretch!" she continued, now rising up, her fine eyes flashing fire upon the lawyer, "how am I degraded to be obliged to sit in your company; but my uncle himself shall expose you. Yes, Sir Archibald, I have sent to Mr. Fortesque entreating him to come to me here—even here, and I expect him this very day, that I may throw myself on my knees before him, and before you too, my husband, if you would but speak kindly to me at length, to acknowledge all my follies, and to ask for pardon of you and of Heaven—for—I am indeed—indeed—an unhappy woman."

At this moment a loud knocking at the door indicated a visitor, and a servant entering announced Mr. and Miss Fortesque, wishing to be admitted to Lady Staines.

"Is he so bitter against me, that he will not condescend to come to my sick-chamber?" said the startled invalid.

"The virtuous have no need to condescend unworthily," said the lady; "and it is you, Sir Archibald, that have been bitter against him, refusing his request at his utmost need, because this vile lawyer, to whom you have of late resigned yourself, persuaded you he was a spendthrift. Beg of Mr. Fortesque and his daughter," she added, turning to the servant—"beg of them, in all our names, to step into this apartment."

The scene that now ensued may *perhaps* be faintly imagined—the first surprise of Mr. Fortesque and Matilda on perceiving me, as well as the lawyer, in presence of the sick baronet—their delight on hearing the turn that had taken place in his original intentions—and the terrible and almost terrific agitation of the lady as she acknowledged, particularly to her uncle, sins and follies which had all but ended in her dishonour—and as she begged the forgiveness of her dying husband, and poured execrations on the artful and seductive man who had spared no pains or expense to destroy her reputation and her peace.

"Take my hand, Georgiana," said the sick baronet, scarcely able to articulate from the effect of the scene—"take my hand"—and he held out his thin fingers to the kneeling lady—"I believe you—I do believe you, and I take to myself much of the blame. Lawyer!—put that will into the fire."

"Into the fire, Sir Archibald?"

"Do it!—you have made it, and you shall burn it with your own hands."

"Sweet soul—sweet innocent being," continued the baronet, his feeble eye resting on the countenance of Matilda, as, deeply affected with the scene, she sat watching the countenances of all, and then gazing at the will blazing into ashes on the grate—"You will be something the better of my property when I am gone

and are you happily—happily married—
—and the baronetcy of Staines

“I know something further which I could not tell you, the apathetic exhaustion seeming again to be upon him. We at first thought he was dying, but as he began to recover, Mr. Fortesque was anxious to see his niece, as well as beginning to feel a renewed pleasure, our harmony received a sudden shock from what followed; for the baronet, beginning to revive, and fixing his eyes on my face, muttered thus: “Who this stranger is I don’t know, but he spoke the first word this morning to undeceive me regarding these my last remaining friends, and I feel myself indebted to him. It was he gave me my drink too when my head swam with fever, and my lips burned with thirst—and it was at the dead of night, that night of the fire—when all was silent in my house—and Lady Staines—Heavens!—what thought is this that comes over me.”

“Can this be raving only?” said the lady, as the company first looked at each other, and then turned their eyes on me.

“Sir,” said the baronet, addressing me with a solemnity that was absolutely distressing, “did you not one night hold a cup of drink to my lips in this very chamber?”

The eyes of all were fixed on me—I felt my face glow with a flush that spoke more than my words—when, with a hesitating voice, I answered that I did.

“And how did you come to be in my house at midnight?”

I made no reply.

The kindling eyes of the baronet wandered from the animated face of his lady to mine, while Matilda seemed ready to faint.

“Answer me truly, sir, as I am a dying man—how long have you been acquainted with Lady Staines?”

“I never spoke to her ladyship in my life.”

“Good heavens, know you not this gentleman?”

“I never saw him that I know of until this morning.”

Matilda began to breathe again, and so did her father, while I in a few words explained, to the astonishment

of all, how that, finding the street-door ajar as I passed, I stepped in to inform the inmates, and that hearing a feeble voice calling for drink, I ventured up stairs and gave attendance to the sick; the fire explained the rest, or at least served to save the evident dread of the lady, lest I should say any thing that would undo all that she had effected; and all now joined in acknowledging with surprise the extraordinary means by which Providence had brought me into their acquaintance, and made me instrumental in rendering them what they were pleased to call the most essential services.

I stood up to take my leave, for, after all, I was still little more than a stranger to those present. As I made my acknowledgments to Mr. Fortesque for the pleasure I had found in his acquaintance since I came to know him, the old man seemed affected, and Matilda, as if forgetting every thing but her feelings, rose and put her right hand frankly into mine. As we looked in each other's faces at this present parting, the eyes of all, particularly of Lady Staines, became fixed upon us. At this instant the silence was startlingly broken by the usual scream from the feeble voice of the sick baronet, and with hectic energy he was just able to say,

"I see it—I see it—this is the fulfilment of my wishes! and there, before me, is the beginning of happiness and love, such as *I* never experienced. Fortesque, do you consent to the evident wishes of these young people?"

"Most willingly," exclaimed the old gentleman, joining our hands again, while I could see his eyes filling with tears as he looked at Matilda.

Why should I dwell upon the rest? why should I tell of the tears of pleasure which ran from the eyes of all, as Matilda and I knelt at the feet of those who now showered blessings upon us, and joined their prayers for that happiness in our future lives for which ample worldly provision had been made by the dying baronet? Alas! however, it was painfully affecting to witness the convulsive sobbings of the regretful Lady Staines, as she contemplated us both, spoke of our present love and future bliss, and thought of what she herself had missed in life.

What shall I add more?—continued my good host, by this time quite affected with his own story,—that bliss has been well realized, in the course of seven happy years, and now this bright morning, during the short time when my Matilda is gone from me, who, since we left England, has become much attached to these valleys, the pleasure of talking of her in her absence almost compensates for the temporary want of her society; and I shall receive her again with enhanced joy after thus, in fancy and by recollection, going over again the strange events in London connected with our first acquaintance.

My friend had scarcely bestowed a concluding caress upon his daughter, and informed me of the subsequent deaths of Sir Archibald and Mr. Fortesque, and of Lady Staines having entered into a second and more happy marriage, but not with the strange nobleman, who has since run a remarkable race both in England and abroad, when a vehicle drove up the avenue, and in a few moments after, starting from his seat, my host hastened down stairs to welcome back his Matilda. The tender embrace of meetings and of partings of those who truly love each other are always affecting. I turned away my head, for I could not look, and the very tones of the soft English voice of the lady, and the glance of her charming blue eyes, touched me almost to tears, as I thought of those I had left at home, and of the pious bliss of wedded love.

From what I perceived during one interesting hour, which was all that I enjoyed of this lady's society, I could very well account for the enthusiasm of my new friend in speaking of his wife, as well as for the minuteness with which he detailed the particulars of their story; and I left his delightful villa on the Rhine with those comforting sensations with which the mind concludes from actual observation, that in many interesting spots, on the variegated surface of this green earth, there are still enjoyed many quiet hours of virtuous and truly enviable felicity.

THE FATAL WHISPER.

BY JOHN GALT.

"Oh the curse of marriage!
That we can call these delicate creatures ours
And not their appetites! I'd rather be a toad
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' use."

OTHELLO:

THE Marina was crowded with company, and the most distinguished of the Palermitan nobility in open carriages were enjoying the gayety of the summer evening, and the refreshing air that breathed gently from the bay. I had seated myself on the stone bench which runs along the dwarf wall, with my back to the sea, enjoying the active and cheerful scene, when a capuchin friar took a place beside me.

He was a middle-aged man, with a pensive cast of countenance, and evidently suffering from infirmity. His appearance, without being remarkable, had less ecclesiastical gravity than is commonly observable among the monks.

In reply to some incidental question which I happened to address to him, he replied in English, and immediately rose and went away. Next evening I seated myself on the same spot; he also returned and again sat down beside me. In that way our acquaintance began and grew to intimacy.

But I will relate his story as he told it. At the time it interested me greatly, and often has it since returned upon my recollection with an indescribable sense of

sadness, arising more from the feelings which the incidents awakened than the apparent sensibility with which he described them. The remains of a military manner regulated the tone of his voice, and he spoke of them with as much fortitude as if he had been describing the adventures of a campaign in which an old companion had perished. His voice was firm, but there was a restraint in the utterance that made the tale impressive, and, without pain, deeply affecting.

It was, indeed, singular, and I more than once intimated that he had awakened my curiosity; but it was not till one evening, when I happened to inquire how long he had worn the garb of a friar, that he deemed me worthy of his confidence.

"It is convenient," said he, "but it is not on that account I have assumed it;" and then he abruptly added, as if the restraint he had put upon himself had suddenly given way, "I much prefer the convent to any other lodging. The friars are sedate and good men; and although they know I am a Protestant, they never trouble me with any sort of religious controversy."

Though accustomed to his thoughtful physiognomy, it seemed to me that in saying this the cast of his countenance underwent a change, and that he looked more than I had ever before remarked, like one whom adversity had touched with no gentle hand. After a momentary pause he began his story:—

On the return of the army from Alexandria,—said he,—the transport in which I had embarked with several other officers became leaky, and we bore away for Messina to repair, or to obtain another vessel. On entering the port, being under quarantine, the passengers disembarked at the lazaretto, where they found apartments, and were too happy in taking possession of them, after the vile Egyptian rooms and the discomfort we had suffered in the transport.

The person who attended to receive our daily orders sometimes brought the English newspapers; I read them with an oppressive eagerness, expecting to hear

something of my friends, but to me they were ever barren ; all my companions, one after the other, met with some little notice or paragraph which gave them pleasure, but none such ever appeared to me.

The dulness of the lazaretto, a square court with a cemetery in the area, would of itself have affected the spirits of most men ; but the silence of the newspapers towards me seemed more ominous of misfortune, and filled my imagination with apprehensions and vague fears to which neither name nor other cause could be assigned. When the period of the quarantine was complete, and all my companions were joyous at being released, I was irresistibly depressed, and in answer to their raillery could only tell that some unaccountable burden weighed upon my spirits, and would not be shaken off by any resolution.

On the day we were at liberty we dined together, and had several English officers then in the garrison as guests. In the evening we all went to the theatre ; the house was crowded. Every box was engaged, which obliged us to take places in the pit. You are aware that owing to the subdivision of the benches in the Sicilian theatres, it sometimes happens that a party is unavoidably separated, the seats being occupied at intervals by other individuals. This took place that night ; my friends were dispersed in different parts of the house, and I was by myself in one of the sittings at the end of the last bench.

I had not been long seated when several other officers came in, with a gentleman in plain clothes, who, as I overheard in the course of his conversation with them, had only that afternoon arrived by the packet from England. He had been the schoolfellow of one of the officers, with whom he was gay and free, telling him of their old companions, and also of his own exploits since they had left Eton. Among other things he mentioned that the cause of his coming abroad was an intrigue, in which he had been engaged with a married lady. It had been discovered by the landlady of an inn on the Bath road, who had threatened to disclose the affair to the friends

of his paramour. "But," said he, "I bought her silence, and have for a few months come out of the way." The name of the lady he did not disclose, indeed refused, but boasted of his success, and of the long time that the guilty intercourse had continued.

This story attracted my particular attention, and yet there was nothing in the circumstances calculated to make any very lasting impression, save only the art and craft of the lady, which he described with contempt and derision, as the result of her experience in deception.

On returning to the hotel from the theatre, which I did alone, before the opera was over, I found, with letters from my wife, a bundle of newspapers. Maria had been for some time, she said, unwell, and had been advised to try the Bath waters; it had, however, so happened that my mother had also been seized with a dangerous illness, which obliged my wife to go hastily to London, where, after waiting some time, she was again advised to return to Bath.

As the letter was written with her wonted tenderness and spirit, I could not but admire the ardour of that filial affection which was so like the earnestness of her love for myself; but when I was about to take up one of the newspapers—it strangely, suddenly, and fearfully flashed across my mind that there was something extraordinary in that journey. In a word, I was wounded with a pang of jealousy, and shook for a time like the aspen. And yet my heart acknowledged that never was a woman more simple in all her ways than Maria—more pure in heart and spirit—more enthusiastic in her affections. The thought, as it crossed my imagination, was as a black demon passing between me and the heavens, eclipsing the unclouded sun. Still I could not reason myself from the horror of the suspicion, which, like an envenomed dart, rankled in my bosom. It seemed as if the augury which had previously darkened my spirit was confirmed—I arose from my seat—I traversed the room in distraction, and abandoned myself, without reason, to the wildest imaginations.

When I had for some time given scope to the full force of the dreadful passion which had so demoniacally possessed me, the cloud passed from my understanding, and I became more calm. I felt even repugnance at myself for having done such injury to my wife in thought; and remorse, like drops of molten sulphur, for the injustice, dropped in greater anguish than fire upon my heart. I soon after again grew more rational, and calmly opened the paper.

For some time nothing interesting attracted my notice, but among the gossiping paragraphs I discovered two lines evidently inserted by authority, for there was a tint of satire in them praising the filial devotion of the lady of a gallant officer then with the army in Egypt; and how, though herself an invalid, she had made a journey to London to comfort his aged mother, who was less in need of consolation than herself.

This sentence was as a shower of bullets in my bosom. The paroxysm of jealousy returned, barbed with a hateful possibility. But I may spare you and myself the description of an agony which language can never express. That too, however, after a time, also subsided. I again had recourse to another number of the newspaper, and in it there was a dignified answer to the slander implied in the wording and markings of the paragraph that had so disturbed me.

But it failed to sooth, for the gentleman had described the craft of his paramour.

This made my case worse—no adequate idea can be given of my thoughts that night. I retired to my own chamber—I wept, I vowed the hoarsest revenge. But what could I do—what proof had I to charge my rival with having dishonoured my family? Him I could not even address. The night was spent in a whirlwind, and I could bring myself to no determination.

At daybreak I went to a convent, where I had then a friend, who, under the name of Anselmo, had long resided there. I had known him when, previously to the Egyptian expedition, I had been quartered in Messina; he was a sensible sedate character, possessed of a judi-

cious knowledge of the world. To him I confided my hideous apprehensions—and when I had ended the impassioned narrative, he remained for some time thoughtful, and then said—

“Go to your hotel, let no one have any cause to suspect your fears, and come back to me in the afternoon, by which time I shall be prepared to offer you some advice.”

I did as he suggested—fortunately my companions, in the gayety of their spirits, had resolved to visit the environs. I feigned a headache, declined to go with them, and thus was left undisturbed.

Whether Father Anselmo had in the mean time consulted with any friend on my unhappy case was not disclosed, but when, at the time appointed, I returned to the convent, I met him at the portal, as he was taking leave of another elderly friar, who, as I entered, eyed me with a melancholy look. I passed, however, on, and was immediately followed by Anselmo, who, instead of conducting me back to his cell, led me into the chapel, which at the time was empty.—It is a gorgeous sanctuary; the shrines and monuments numerous, and though the lighted altars sent forth a dim splendour, there was something in the air and aspect of the place which weighed upon my heart as if the tranquillity which reigned around had been palpable.

When we had walked in silence to a confessional, which stood at the east end of the chapel, near the high altar, Father Anselmo went into the chair—“I am not,” said he, “so ingrained with our religion as to deem this an occasion that will not sanction the indecorum—kneel to me as if you were a penitent, and I will answer you as sincerely as if the sin which has brought us here were of your own commission. Kneel, no one will then interrupt us, if your agitation master your fortitude.”

I knelt, scarce knowing what I did. When I had bent forward about a minute to the aurical of the confessional, Father Anselmo said—

“There is a cause to justify you to suspect.”

I groaned with anguish, and could make no reply.

"But let no one still suspect the secret of your heart—write to your wife as if you never questioned her fidelity—go home with all the speed you can—but before you see her, go to the inn where the discovery was made. The landlady was bribed to silence—a better price will unlock her tongue—and your own sagacity will then direct you what should be done, if it should prove the adulteress was your wife."

"She shall die," cried I aloud, starting in an agony on my feet;—at that instant the newly arrived stranger with his friend the officer entered the church—I cannot describe the tempest of my soul at that moment.

"It is he," I exclaimed, pointing him out to the friar.

"Compose yourself," was his answer. "Let us question him—I am calmer than you: leave the business to me."

Father Anselmo then went towards the stranger and his friend, and addressed them as strangers, pointing out to their attention several of the altarpieces which were considered distinguished specimens of art; I followed close behind him, but said nothing, nor was I capable of joining two sentences—I attempted, however, to enter into conversation with the officer who accompanied the stranger. What he must have thought of me I can now well imagine,—my tongue at the time gave utterance to words which had no connexion with my mind. Father Anselmo afterward inquired what I had been saying—I had no remembrance of it, but he mentioned that he had several times observed the officer turn round abruptly, and look at me with an apprehensive eye.

Father Anselmo himself, in the mean time, was particularly courteous to the stranger, and after we had taken a turn or two in the chapel I grew more collected, and went closer to him. Immediately I perceived that he changed his manner; his eyes became vivid and searching, and in conducting the stranger along the side-altars to look at the pictures particularly, he frequently cast upon him a sudden glance, especially when he ob-

served his attention arrested by any remarkable figure among the female sitters. But the stranger inspected them all with equal indifference.

Father Anselmo then affected to be a critic, and discoursed of the colouring of the several pictures with the affectation of a *cicerone*. It seemed to me that his object in this was to ascertain if the taste of the stranger preferred any particular colour, but in this too he failed. He could derive nothing to assist his curious metaphysical investigation, for I soon perceived that his endeavour was to find out some key to the associations of the stranger's mind, such as skilful players at the game of *Twenty Questions* sometimes obtain—and are thereby enabled to discover the most occult thoughts of their antagonists.

The stranger and the officer his companion then went away.

"I suspect," said Father Anselmo, as they left the church, "that you are disturbing yourself without cause. The intrigue which that gentleman has accidentally disclosed has been but a young man's folly—he has no remorse for what he has done. The woman deserves not your anxiety, if she prove your wife; she must be bad, and their connexion has been a mere animal indulgence, which leaves no sting of guilt behind. I have tried him by all these pictures, and even in the one there of the Roman lady listening to the preaching of the young priest, who became enamoured of her, and who resisted the temptation because she was married; but he was not in the slightest degree moved, even though I interpreted the legend as much like the story you had overheard as possible. Think, therefore, no more of any offence towards yourself in this affair, but go home and get the fact proved as soon as possible, to be rid of one that must be familiar with voluptuousness."

The words of Father Anselmo seemed oracular. I knew not their import, nor the mode of his reflection, though I comprehended the scope of both. It was, however, impossible that I could, by any resolution, shake off the love which I cherished for Maria. I

recalled to mind her beauty and simplicity, and that graceful piety so unlike the gross ardour that the stranger had described; but the storm of my jealousy was over, and a deep and exquisite sorrow took possession of my bosom. Why, however, attempt to describe an anguish that must be felt, not imagined, and which threatens to return as the remembrance is refreshed, by recalling the visible circumstances in which it was first experienced? Endeavour to conceive for yourself, and when you have done so with all the powers of your imagination, how faint and feeble will it be to the reality of what I suffered!

Two days after I left my fellow-passengers, and returned to England by the same packet that had brought out the destroyer of my peace. Immediately on my arrival at Falmouth, I set off for the inn where the iniquity had taken place.

Having been then for several years absent from England, I affected a curiosity respecting the domestic occurrences of the kingdom, which was not felt, and perceiving that there was no bustle in the house, on pretence of conversing with the landlady on these topics, I begged her to make tea for me. In the course of her doing so, my conversation was wild and desultory, and several times I observed her suddenly gaze at me. Gradually I brought the various subjects I had affected to speak of to a point, and then I earnestly told her, and with considerable emotion, that I had some cause for jealousy, and that she must excuse the distraction of mind with which she saw me agitated.

Having thus interested her feelings, I then turned the conversation with all my ingenuity on the time, and finally the place of guilt, relating several circumstances which the stranger, Sir Mandeville Webster, had mentioned concerning the discovery, and in which she had borne a part, even to the sum by which he had purchased her silence. Her emotion increasing to amazement and alarm convinced me that he had told no untrue tale, but still she only affected to grieve in sympathy for my distress. I was, however, satisfied with

the testimony of my witness, and as to have offered her money for a more circumstantial disclosure would have been improper, I abruptly quitted her and proceeded directly to London. The expiring embers of affection for Maria prevented me from disclosing my name, feebly hoping that some explicable mistake might possibly yet be discovered.

My reception by Maria was with all the flutter and fondness of pure and fervent affection. Oh heavens! but her blandishments were as the foldings of a serpent—my anguish more dreadful than the agonies of Laocoon!—but I stifled my disgust. She spoke of her children with the admiration of a mother. She brought them to me with delight, but I discerned that she once or twice looked at me with a strange speculation in her eyes. In all, save in those disastrous glances, she was what she had ever been, but my heart, though not altogether alienated, was perplexed, and its throbs were as the stings of scorpions.

Craft and cunning were never so perfectly performed as on that fatal morning. It was impossible to look upon her with suspicion. Innocence was in all her gestures; but once I saw her hastily turn her head to conceal a sudden gush of tears. After this could I doubt? I flung my love to the winds.

A brief embarrassed pause took place for a moment; without saying a word, I ordered the nursery-maid to convey the children to their grandmother, and then sternly remained in silence till they were gone. Maria sat pale and amazed; she asked no question—perhaps was unable. She saw the children depart without emotion and without caress. Never was detected guilt so visibly confounded.

When the carriage with the children and the servant had left the house, I then said with a stern voice, but my heart wept blood from every pore, “Madam, answer me a few questions.”

She made no reply, but I continued—

“When did you become acquainted with Sir Mandeville Webster?”

She made no reply.

"Was it in your journey between Bath and London?"

She made no reply.

"Answer me, unhappy woman; I would, for your own sake, spare you from the tongues of the world,—answer me!"—and in saying these words I rose; she at the same time also started up, and extending her arms in phrensy, burst into a wild, demoniac fit of mirthless laughter, so shrill, so hideous, so unlike all human sound, that I shudder with horror as I think of it. Then suddenly pausing, she looked solemnly at me for a moment, and dropped senseless on the floor.

Humanity and some feeling of withered tenderness would not allow me to leave her till her maid, with the assistance of the other women, had recalled her senses. But as soon as I observed the dawn of returning reason I left the house and proceeded to her father's, where I found his lordship at home, in his library alone. I hastened into his presence, but as I entered the room, my feelings overcame me, and I threw myself on his shoulder, unable to speak.

After this paroxysm had subsided, he requested me to be seated, and, I thought with an air of coldness and distance, inquired what so agitated me, and when I had returned to England.

His manner was additional proof—it was as if he knew and connived at the guilt. He is acquainted with my dishonour, I inwardly said, but his regard for a child to whom he was ever devoted has made him take her part. The thought passed through my mind like electricity, and nerved me to be firm. Accordingly, collecting myself, I told him what I had the misfortune to learn. I told him all—how it accidentally first reached my hearing in the theatre, to the examination of the landlady, and the dreadful scene I had just witnessed.

During the whole recital he sat as silent as his daughter, but it was the silence of attention, and not, like hers, of consternation—for he was a calm, self-sustained character, seldom off his guard, and shrewd in his knowledge of mankind.

When I had closed my wild story, he made no remark, but rising, walked several times across the library. I conceived that he was meditating what reply to make, and waited with resolution; at last he stopped opposite to me, and said emphatically,

"This is a strange business—it is not impossible to be true." At this expression I saw his countenance change, and a tear rush into his eyes, which he hastily wiped away.

The sight of that most respectable, and in all things serene and self-possessed old man so affected, touched me with exquisite pity—I rose, and being now certain that nothing could change the woful fact, I said abruptly that while I remained in town my home would be at my mother's with the children, but that the unfortunate Maria would require his care.

"You have lost no time since your arrival," replied he, a little proudly as I thought, "but I will call on you in the course of the day."

We then parted. There was nothing in this sad interview to make me question what I had heard; but, on the contrary, a strong confirmation of the justice of my jealousy. It was a spur in the side of my intent, to have the legal preliminaries for a divorce instituted without delay.

By this time agitation had exhausted my strength, insomuch that when I reached my mother's house I was seriously indisposed, and the children with their gladness and innocent caresses augmented my dejection. My mother was not at home; the maid had described to her the frame of mind in which she had seen me, and the old lady had instantly gone to my house. I was not, however, acquainted with this circumstance at the time, and concluded that her absence was in consequence of her reluctance to see me, forgetting, in that disconsolate moment, that the mother's heart ever prompts her to fly to her offspring in distress. But a deplorable fatality was upon me, and every thing that took place on that eventful day ministered to the sharpening of my affliction.

After waiting some time for the return of Lady Osprey, I called in the nursery maid, and learned where she had gone. With boiling veins, and a head incapable of combining two thoughts, I resolved to go in quest of her, but in that crisis she returned; on reaching my house, she was informed that Maria had left it in a hackney-coach without saying where she intended to go. The servants were all alarmed, and no one could give the slightest clew to the mysterious passion in which, after so long an absence, I had returned.

I then told her ladyship of the discovery, and at the same time Lord Baronsdale was announced—he too had been at my house, and had been informed of the manner in which Maria had withdrawn herself. His look was firm but stern; he had summoned all his fortitude, and while it was evident that his spirit was writhing with a thousand wounds, his countenance had an air of resolution and sadness.

“Let us not,” said he, “waste time in idle talk, your happiness and mine are equally at stake; I have thought on all you have told me; there may be some error—and we must begin the investigation anew. I have a postchaise at the door—you must go with me to that landlady, she shall not earn her bribe from our credulity.”

I made no answer, but seized my hat to accompany him in an instant,—he wrung his hands with emotion; another messenger was first despatched to my house, and also to his lordship’s, to ascertain if Maria had returned—but they brought back no tidings.

We then resolved to proceed in the chaise, and reached the inn early in the evening, where, in passing to a parlour, we met Maria!—I had before this received proof enough, but the sight of her there crowned the evidence.—Why had she come to that house? I had not mentioned any thing to her of my having been there. By what miraculous accident had she come, and for what other purpose than to deal with the bribed landlady? rushed in phrensy on my mind.

Before I had time to make any remark Maria pulled the bell, and requested the presence of the landlady,

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and on her entrance demanded with a steady voice if she was the Mistress Osprey of whom she had spoken to me.

The good woman, before answering, looked confused, and then said, hesitatingly, that she was not, and I exclaimed with indignation—

“These tricks, Maria, will serve you no longer. How came you here?—by what instinct have you thought of this house? How much was your bribe? Sir Mandeville Webster’s was a hundred guineas.”

Maria made no answer, she only looked at me, but the landlady started at the name of Sir Mandeville, and I turned to Lord Baronsdale.

“It would not be expensive,” said I, “to get any evidence desired from this woman.”

“You are right,” said his lordship, with a sigh, and covered his face with his handkerchief, exclaiming, with great fervour, “Oh, Maria, to what devil have you sold yourself?—to look so innocent—to be so plausible!—and—”

“You are not satisfied?” was her reply. “Let Osprey take the woman in his chaise and proceed with her to Bath; and, my lord, till I am proved guilty, give me your protection; I will go with you.”

The energy with which this was said strengthened the impression which so many circumstances had made. It was unlike the gentle and retiring Maria to show herself so decisive.

The journey to Bath was arranged as she proposed; the landlady at first made some scruple, but it was stifled by the words “You must,” from Maria.

We travelled all night, but slowly, as it was desired, or rather ordered, by Maria, that we should not reach Bath till an advanced hour in the morning, and that no opportunity should be afforded for her to have any further communication with the landlady. I was spell-bound—I could not divine her intent—but she appeared animated by some extraordinary purpose, and she never once appeared to notice me.

When we reached Bath, instead of proceeding to any hotel, she directed the chaise to a particular house in

Pultney-street, and ours to follow. On reaching the door, the instant that it was opened she directed her father to come in with her, and the landlady and me to follow. She then, with the same apparent equanimity, ordered the servant to bid Lady Heatherstone, his mistress, come to her for a single moment—we were still standing when the lady entered.

The landlady, on seeing her ladyship, started, and turning suddenly to me, before any other could utter a word, said, with an agitated voice, "This is the Mistress Osprey."

The lady instantly turned pale, and gazing at the landlady, whom she at once recognised, said—

"You mistake, I am Lady Heatherstone."

"Oh, why did you add the guilt of falsehood to your sin!" cried the contrite landlady; "you told me yourself your name, on the vile morning of that night when you and this other lady stopped at our house."

Lady Heatherstone rejoined—"You are in some mistake; but what does this mean?—why, ladies and gentlemen, are you here, and what is the object of these questions?"

Lord Baronsdale said nothing, but, with his mouth pursed, seemed waiting some result.

"Madam," after a momentary pause, said I, "when I last saw your friend, Sir Mandeville Webster—"

"Oh, Webster! do you know him?" was her exclamation of astonishment, and she flung herself on a sofa, and covered her face with her hands.

I rushed towards Maria to catch her in my embrace, but her spirit was gone—I had only her corpse in my arms.

From that hour I have but existed—our unhappy children are both dead. Had they lived, perhaps, I might have endeavoured to resume my profession, but the eldest only survived a year, and the second scarcely another. Since that time I have been but a breathing thing—an abstract of humanity—and the solitude of the cloister has been my home. Had we possessed any such asylum in England I had not come to Sicily. But it matters not—all places are now alike to me.

THE SLEEPLESS WOMAN.

BY WILLIAM JERDAN.*

CHAPTER I.

"Blessed be he that first invented sleep, for it covers a man all over like a mantle."

Sancho Panza, passim.

HEAVILY set in massive brass, whose rich and ingenious carving was tarnished and dull, a ponderous lamp swung from a ceiling blackened by its smoke. Every thing in the room spoke of time, but of time that had known no change. Knights, whose armour was, at the latest, of two centuries back—ladies, in dresses from which their descendants started in dismay—looked out from the discoloured tapestry; and the floor, dark with age, added to the gloom. Beside the hearth, whose fire, from the rain beating down the huge chimney, burned every moment dimmer, sat two old domestics. The man in a scarlet gown, and a belt, from which hung a heavy bunch of keys, was the seneschal; and opposite was his wife, in a brown silk dress, and a string of ebony beads, which she was busily employed in counting. Between them was a small antique oak table, where a flask and two bell-mouthed glasses appeared temptations which, it must be owned, somewhat interrupted the telling of the beads. In the centre of the chamber stood an immense hearse-like bed; the purple

* Editor of The Literary Gazette, &c. &c.

velvet curtains swept to the ground, and at each corner drooped a large plume of black ostrich-feathers. On this bed lay a little withered old man, apparently in the last extremity of age, and very close upon the border of death. His spare form was hidden in an ample black robe, fastened round the waist with a white girdle, on which were graven strange characters in red; and on his breast was a white square, covered with stars and signs wrought in gold. The old man's face was ghastly pale, and rendered yet paler by the contrast of his black scull-cap, which was drawn down even to his gray and shagged eyebrows. But the features were restless; and the small keen eyes, though fast losing their brightness, were full of anxiety. The wind shook the tall narrow windows, and howled in the old trees of the avenue; at every fresh gust the baron's impatience seemed to increase—for what we are telling relates to the Baron de Launaye.

"'Tis a rough night," muttered he; "but Adolphe is as rough a rider—and a dangerous road; but I am the first De Launaye who ever drew bridle for that. And then my summons—it was sure to reach him; ay, though alone, in the midnight bower of the mistress whose name and his suspicion had never coupled together even in a dream—even though consciousness were drowned in the crimson flowing of the wine—though sleeping as men sleep after battle, pillowed on the body of their deadliest enemy, or of their nearest and dearest friend—my summons would be borne on his inmost soul. But will he come, at the bidding of his dying uncle?—will Adolphe, he, the only human being whom I ever loved—will he or will he not come?"

The question was answered even at the moment it was breathed. The horn at the castle-gate was blown impatiently—the fall of the drawbridge was heard—a moment's pause, and a light foot sprang up the oaken staircase with all the speed of haste and youth. The door opened, and in rushed a young cavalier. The white plumes of his cap were drenched with wet—the diamond clasp that fastened them was dim with damp

—but his bright auburn hair glistened with the rain-drops. Hastily flinging his riding-cloak, heavy with moisture, to the ground, the stranger sprang to the bedside. A gleam of human love, of human joy, passed over the old man's face, as tenderly and gently his nephew asked of his tidings, and expressed such hopes as affection hopes when hope there is none.

"Child of my love," murmured the dying baron, "for whose sake only I have ever given one thought to the things of earth, bear yet a moment with the feeble wretch who but a brief while will stand between you and the title of your ancestors and wealth. Many a prince of your mother's house would think his kingdom overpaid if purchased by its half. You are young—I never was—my heart, even in boyhood, was old with premature knowledge. You have that beauty the want of which has made my life a curse—you have that strength of body the want of which has paralyzed my strength of mind. I have doubted if happiness dwells on this evil earth—I will not doubt when I hope for yours. You will hear me called necromancer: out on the base fools who malign that which they understand not, and would bring down the lofty aim of science, the glorious dream of virtue, to their own low level! You will hear me called miser: Adolphe, have you ever found me so?"

"My father—my more than father!" passionately exclaimed the young man, hiding his face on the pillow, as if ashamed of the violence of mortal grief, in the presence of one so soon to be immortal.

"Adolphe," continued his uncle, "you have heard, though not from me—for I sought not to weigh down your ardent mind with all that has pressed upon me with the burden of hopelessness, and long has the knowledge been mine—that the fetters of clay are too heavy for the spirit. Your young hand was fitter for the lance than the crucible; and the bridle-rein would have been ill exchanged for the lettered scroll. But something I know of that future, into which even the sage can look but dimly. Adolphe, the only question I asked was for

thee ! Alas ! the vanity of such wisdom ! It has told of danger that menaces, but not of the skill that avoids. My child, evil came into the world with woman, and in her is bound up the evil of your destiny. Vain as the glance they throw on the polished steel of their mirror—false as the vow they make for the pleasure of breaking—inconstant as the wind, which changes from point to point, and for whose change no philosophy hath ever discovered a cause : shun them, Adolphe, as you would disloyalty to your king, flight from your enemy, or falsehood to your friend."

The old man's voice became inaudible, and his head sank on Adolphe's shoulder :—" Margarita, water—or, Jacques, give me the wine." The youth tried to pour a few drops into the baron's mouth. The dying man motioned back the glass, and looking in the cavalier's face with a strong expression of affection and anxiety, muttered something of "woman" and "danger"—"bright," "eyes," "bright," "beware"—these were his last broken words. He expired.

CHAPTER II.

CONTRARY to the charitable expectations of his neighbours, the Baron de Launaye was buried with all the rites of the church ; the holy water was sprinkled on the corse, and the holy psalm sung over the coffin. A marble tablet marked his grave ; and there the moonlight slept as lovingly as ever it did on the sinless tomb of saint or martyr. The new Baron de Launaye lamented his uncle's death in a very singular manner, for he was his heir—and the young and the rich have not much time for regret. But Adolphe (he was remarkable from a child for his memory) could not forget the kindness—and more than kindness—the love that his uncle had lavished on the little orphan who,

noble and penniless at the age of five years, was left dependent on his bounty. However, sorrow cannot—indeed nothing in this world can—last for ever. Adolphe's grief became first only sad; next, melancholy; thirdly, calm; and fourthly, settled down into a respectful remembrance, and a resolve to bear his uncle's last words in mind. Indeed, the muttered, vague, and uncertain prediction quite haunted him.

"I am sure," said he, in one of his many pondering moods, "I am sure my past experience confirms his words. I never got into a scrape but a woman was the cause. I had been in my outset at court, page to the Duke Forté d'Imhault, and, gone with him on that splendid embassy to Russia, had he not been displeased with my awkwardness in fastening the dutchess's sandal."

And he laughed as he said this: who in the world could guess why the loss of his appointment should make the young baron laugh!

"And then, who caused the duel between me and my Pylades, the Marquis de Lusignan, but that little jilt Mdlle. Laure? However, my sword only grazed his arm: he wore an exquisite blue silk scarf, and we were better friends than ever. Oh, my uncle was right: women were born to be our torment."

Still was this conviction impressed on his mind like a duty. Yet he could not help thinking that a few bright eyes would light up the old hall better than the huge brazen lamps which now served to make darkness visible. From thinking of the pleasantness of such an illumination, he began to think of its difficulties; and the difficulties of the project soon referred only to the place. One thought suggests another; and from thinking how many obstacles opposed the introduction of bright eyes and sweet smiles into the castle, he arrived at the conclusion, how easily they were to be obtained in other parts.

To say the truth, Paris became daily more familiar to his mind's eye; and, as he justly observed, staying at the dull old castle could do his uncle no good, and he was quite sure it did himself none. Now, in spite

of philanthropy, people are not so very fond of doing good gratuitously: but, to be sure, such doctrines were not so much discussed in those days as they are in ours, though the practice was about the same. Sometimes he argued with himself. "It is as well to be out of harm's way;"—and the prediction and a cold shudder came together. But we are ready enough to dare the danger we do not know: and though a few years of Parisian life had placed the nephew's early on a level with the uncle's late experience, touching the evil inherent in womanhood, nevertheless Adolphe supposed their bad qualities might be borne, at all events, better than the dulness of the Château de Launaye.

One day riding with his bridle on his horse's neck, meditating whether his next ride should not be direct to Paris, a most uncommon spectacle in that unfrequented part of the country attracted his attention. This was a large lumbering coach, drawn by six horses, whose rich harness and housings bore the crest in gold—a lynx rampant. A very natural curiosity (by-the-by, all curiosity is natural enough) made him look in at the window. Was there ever a face half so beautiful as that of the girl who, like himself, actuated by natural curiosity, looked out as he looked in? The black silk wimple was drawn over her head, but allowed a very red upper lip, an exquisite Grecian nose, and a most brilliant pair of eyes to be seen. Our young cavalier sat as if he had been stupified. This is a very common effect of love at first. It goes off, however—so it did with Adolphe. His first act on recovering his senses was to gallop after the coach. He spurred on, and caught a second glance of the most radiant orbs that ever revolved in light. Large, soft, clear, and hazel, as those of a robin—they were bright and piercing as those of a falcon. Certainly De Launaye had never seen such eyes before, or at least none that ever took such an effect upon him.

He ate no dinner that day—walked by moonlight on the terrace—and the only thing which excited his attention was the seneschal's information, that the Marquise

de Surville and her granddaughter were come to stay for some months at their château.

"They could not have done that in the late baron's time—the Lord be good unto his soul!" And the old man forthwith commenced the history of some mysterious feud between the two families, in which the deceased Baron Godfred had finally remained victor.

To this tedious narrative of ancient enmities Adolphe was little inclined to listen. "A name and an estate are all our ancestors have a right to leave behind them. The saints preserve us from a legacy of their foes! Nothing could be worse,—except their friends."

The next morning the baron arranged his suit of sables with unusual care, though it must be confessed he always took care enough.

"Pray Heaven the marquise may be of my way of thinking respecting the quarrels of our forefathers! Some old ladies have terrible memories," were Adolphe's uppermost ideas as he rode over the drawbridge at the Château de Surville, which had been promptly lowered to his summons;—their only neighbour, he had thought it but courteous to offer his personal respects. How much more cheerful did the saloon, with its hangings of sea-green silk, worked in gold, seem than his own hall, encumbered with the dusty trophies of his ancestors. To be sure, the young baron was not at that moment a very fair judge; for the first thing that met him on his entrance was a glance from the same pair of large bright eyes which had been haunting him for the last four-and-twenty hours.

The grandmother was as stern a looking old gentlewoman as ever had knights in armour for ancestors: still, her eyes, also bright, clear, and piercing, somewhat resembled those of her granddaughter. On the rest of her face time had wrought "strange disfeatures." She was silent; and, after the first compliments, resumed the volume she had been reading on the baron's appearance. It was a small book, bound in black velvet, with gold clasps, richly wrought. Adolphe took it for granted it was her breviary; and inwardly con-

cluded how respectable is that piety in an old woman which leaves the young one under her charge quite at liberty ! The visiter's whole attention was soon devoted to the oriel window where sat the beautiful Clotilde de Surville. The Baron de Launaye piqued himself on fastidious taste in women and horses : he had had some experience in both. But Clotilde was faultless. There she leaned, with the splendour of day full upon her face ; it fell upon her pure complexion like joy upon the heart, and the sunbeams glittered amid the thick ringlets till every curl was edged with gold. Her dress alone seemed capable of improvement ; but it is as well to leave something to the imagination, and there was ample food for Adolphe's, in picturing the change that would be wrought upon Clotilde by a Parisian milliner. "This comes," thought he, "of being brought up in an old German castle."

For very shame he at last rose ; when, with a grim change of countenance, meant for a smile, the marquise asked him to stay dinner. It is a remark not the less true for being old (though now-à-days opinions are all on the change), that love-making is a thing "to hear, and not to tell." We shall therefore leave the progress of the wooing, and come to the *dénouement*, which was the most proper possible, viz. marriage. Adolphe had been the most devoted of lovers, and Clotilde had given him a great deal of modest encouragement ; that is, her bright eyes had often wandered in search of his, and the moment they had found them, had dropped to the ground ; and whenever he entered the room, a blush had come into her cheek, like the light into the pearl, filling it with the sweet hues of the rose. Never did love-affair proceed more prosperously. The old seneschal was the only person who grumbled. He begged leave to remind the young baron that it was not showing proper respect to his ancestors not to take up their quarrels.

"But things are altered since the days when lances were attached to every legacy," returned Adolphe.

"We are altering every thing now-a-days," replied

the old man ; " I don't see, however, that we are a bit the better off."

" I, at all events, expect happiness," replied his master, " in this change of my condition."

" Ay, ay, so we all do before we are married : what we find after there is no use in saying, for two reasons ; first, you would not believe me ; secondly, my wife might hear what I'm telling."

" Ah !" exclaimed the young baron, " the caution that marriage teaches ! If it were only for the prudence I should acquire, it would be worth my while to marry."

" Alas ! rashness never yet wanted a reason. My poor young master ! the old marquise and her dark-eyed granddaughter have taken you in completely."

" Taken me in !" ejaculated De Launaye, angrily ; " why, you old fool, were this a mere match of interest I might thank my stars for such a lucky chance. Young, beautiful, high-born, and rich, Clotilde has but to appear at the court, and ensure a much higher alliance than mine. What motive could they have ?"

" I do not know ; but when I don't know people's motives, I always suppose the worst," replied the obstinate Dominique.

" Charitable," laughed his master.

" And besides," resumed the seneschal, " the old marquise plagued her husband into the grave ; and I dare say her granddaughter means to do as much for you."

" A novel reason, at all events, for taking a husband," said De Launaye, " in order that you may plague him to death afterward."

CHAPTER III.

WELL, the wedding-day arrived at last. De Launaye could have found some fault with his bride's costume, but for her face. There was a stiffness in the rigid white satin, and the ruff was at least two inches too high—indeed he did not see any necessity for the ruff at all; they had been quite out some years at Paris. However, he said nothing, remembering that a former hint on the subject of dress had not been so successful as its merits deserved. He had insinuated, and that in a compliment too, a little lowering of the ruff before, as a mere act of justice to the ivory throat, when Clotilde had rejoined, answering in a tone which before marriage was gentle reproof (a few months after it would have sounded like reproach), that she hoped "the Baron de Launaye would prefer propriety in his wife to display." The sense of the speech was forgotten in its sentiment; a very usual occurrence by-the-by. However, the bride looked most beautiful; her clear, dark eyes swam in light—the liquid brilliancy of happiness—the brightness, but not the sadness of tears. The ceremony was over, the priest and the marquise had given their blessings; the latter also added some excellent advice, which was not listened to with all the attention it deserved. The young couple went to their own castle in a new and huge coach, every one of whose six horses wore white and silver favours. Neighbours they had none, but a grand feast was given to the domestics; and Dominique, at his master's express orders, broached a pipe of Bourdeaux. "I can't make my vassals," said De Launaye, "as happy as myself; but I can make them drunk, and that is something towards it."

The day darkened into night; and here, according

to all regular precedents in romance, hero and heroine ought to be left to themselves ; but there never yet was a rule without an exception. However, to infringe upon established custom as little as possible, we will enter into no details of how pretty the bride looked in her nightcap, but proceed forthwith to the baron's first sleep. He dreamed that the sun suddenly shone into his chamber. Dazzled by the glare he awoke, and found the bright eyes of his bride gazing tenderly on his face. Weary as he was, still he remembered how uncourteous it would be to lie sleeping while she was so wide awake, and he forthwith roused himself as well as he could. Many persons say they can't sleep in a strange bed ; perhaps this might be the case with his bride ; and in new situations people should have all possible allowance made for them.

They rose early the following morning, the baroness bright-eyed and blooming as usual, the baron pale and abattu. They wandered through the castle ; De Launaye told of his uncle's prediction.

"How careful I must be of you," said the bride, smiling ; "I shall be quite jealous."

Night came, and again Adolphe was wakened from his first sleep by Clotilde's bright eyes. The third night arrived, and human nature could bear no more.

"Good God, my dearest !" exclaimed the husband, "do you never sleep !"

"Sleep !" replied Clotilde, opening her large bright eyes, till they were even twice their usual size and brightness. "Sleep ! one of my noble race sleep ! I never slept in my life."

"She never sleeps !" ejaculated the baron, sinking back on his pillow in horror and exhaustion.

It had been settled that the young couple should forthwith visit Paris—thither they at once proceeded. The beauty of the baroness produced a most marvellous sensation even in that city of sensations. Nothing was heard of for a week but the enchanting eyes of the Baroness de Launaye. A diamond necklace of a new

pastern was invented in her honour, and called *sur beaux yeux de Clotilde*.

"Those eyes," said a prince of the blood, whose taste in such matters had been cultivated by some years of continual practice, "those eyes of Mde. de Launaye will rob many of our young gallants of their rest."

"Very true," briefly replied her husband.

Well, the baroness shone like a meteor in every scene, while the baron accompanied her, the spectre of his former self. Sallow, emaciated, everybody said he was going into a consumption. Still it was quite delightful to witness the devotedness of his wife—she could scarcely bear him a moment out of her sight.

At length they left Paris, accompanied by a gay party, for their château. But brilliant as were these guests, nothing distracted the baroness's attention from her husband, whose declining health became every hour more alarming. One day, however, the young Chevalier de Ronsarde,—he, the conqueror of a thousand hearts—the besieger of a thousand more—whose conversation was that happy mixture of flattery and scandal which is the *beau idéal* of dialogue,—engrossed Mde. de Launaye's attention; and her husband took the opportunity of slipping away unobserved. He hastened into a gloomy avenue—the cedars, black with time and age, met like night overhead, and far and dark did their shadows fall on the still and deep lake beside. Worn, haggard, with a timorous and hurried, yet light step, the young baron might have been taken for one of his own ancestors, permitted for a brief period to revisit his home on earth, but invested with the ghastliness and the gloom of the grave.

"She never sleeps!" exclaimed the miserable Adolphe—"she never sleeps! day and night her large bright eyes eat like fire into my heart." He paused, and rested for support against the trunk of one of the old cedars. "Oh, my uncle, why did not your prophecy, when it warned me against danger, tell me distinctly in what the danger consisted? To have a wife who never

sleeps ! Dark and quiet lake, how I envy the stillness of your depths—the shadows which rest upon your waves !”

At this moment a breath of wind blew a branch aside—a sunbeam fell upon the baron’s face ; he took it for the eyes of his wife. Alas ! his remedy lay temptingly before him—the still, the profound, the shadowy lake. De Launaye took one plunge—it was into eternity. Two days he was missing—the third his lifeless body floated on the heavy waters. The Baron de Launaye had committed suicide, and the bright-eyed baroness was left a disconsolate widow.

Such is the tale recorded in the annals of the house of De Launaye. Some believe it entirely, justly observing there is nothing too extraordinary to happen. Others (for there always will be people who affect to be wiser than their neighbours) say that the story is an ingenious allegory—and that the real secret of the Sleepless Lady was jealousy. Now, if a jealous wife can’t drive a man out of his mind and into a lake, we do not know what can !

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DRAMATIC SCENES,

FOUNDED ON

VICTOR HUGO'S CELEBRATED TRAGEDY OF HERNANI.

BY LORD FRANCIS LEVESON GOWER.*

SCENE,

An open Court in Sarragossa. On the left, the walls of the house of SILVA, with a balcony; on the right, houses and streets. Here and there an occasional light in the windows.

Enter DON CARLOS, with DON SANCHEZ, DON MATHIAS, and DON RICARDO, Courtiers, wrapped in long cloaks.

DON CARLOS.

This is the place! My heart beats high. No light
Yet in her lattice—all beside are bright.
All but the one which I wish, in vain,
To see her taper.†

DON SANCHEZ.

Let us speak again

Of that same traitor who deserved to die;
And yet your highness suffered him to fly,
And thereby cheat the hangman.

* Author of the translation of Goëthe's *Faust*, the *Camp of Wallenstein*, *Poems*, &c. &c.

† The previous part of the drama is chiefly occupied by the efforts of DON CARLOS, King of Spain (afterward Charles, fifth emperor), to obtain the love of DONNA SOL DE SILVA, whom her aged kinsman and guardian, the DUC DE SILVA, means to wed—but both rivalled by HERNANI, at present a bandit chief. The following scenes commence by a second attempt of the king to obtain, by imitating the signal of her lover, an interview with the lady.

DON CARLOS.

As you say.

DON MATHIAS.

Maybe the bandier's chief!

DON CARLOS.

Perhaps he may.

The chief or not, no leader e'er was seen,
No king, of prouder gait or lordlier mien.

DON SANCHEZ.

His name?

DON CARLOS.

Er—Fer—Some name which ends in i.

DON SANCHEZ.

Perhaps Hernani?

DON CARLOS.

Yes.

DON SANCHEZ.

'Tis he!

DON MATHIAS.

'Tis he!

DON SANCHEZ.

And can your highness what he said recall?

DON CARLOS.

This is not the point which makes the strife;

I want the gallant's mistress—not his life.

Two windows dark. With what a lingering gait

Old Time can shuffle on to those who wait!

The moment we enjoy, his step is fleet.

[*The last light in the window is extinguished.*

The last is out, and darkness rules the street.

[*Turning to DONNA SOL's window.*

Accursed lattice, when will you be bright?

Shine out, fair star, and dissipate the night.

Has it struck twelve?

DON RICARDO.

'Twill soon.

DON CARLOS.

We must proceed

To work, or others may prevent the deed.

[*A light appears in DONNA SOL's window.*]

Look, see, her shadow crossed the glass but now.
Day never dawned upon the mountain's brow
More gladly welcome. Let us make her hear
The expected signal. Yet the fair may fear
Our numbers. Gentlemen, retire aside,
And watch the other. Thus shall we divide
The lovers. Yours the robber, mine the bride.

DON RICARDO.

A fair arrangement!

DON CARLOS.

If he comes, one thrust,—
Lunge out, and lay the hero in the dust.
While he lies bleeding, I shall seize the fair,
And carry off. Thus we dispose the pair.
And yet the man is brave, so thrust with skill,
Give him enough to quiet, not to kill.

[*The Lords disperse. When they are gone, DON CARLOS claps his hands three times. At the third time the window opens, and DONNA SOL appears at the balcony.*]

DONNA SOL (*on the balcony*).

Hernani!

DON CARLOS.

I am lost if I reply.

DONNA SOL.

I come.

[*She shuts the window, and presently comes out of the door, with a lamp in her hand. DON CARLOS advances precipitately towards her; DONNA SOL drops her lamp.*]

Oh, Heavens! another's step! I fly.

DON CARLOS (*detaining her*).

Lady—

DONNA SOL.

That voice too!

DON CARLOS.

Can that voice appear
Less amorous than the one you wish to hear?
That voice is but a lover's and a king's.

DONNA SOL.

The king!

DON CARLOS.

Command him. At your feet he flings
His wealth, his crown, his power to smite and save :
The king commands, but Carlos is your slave.

DONNA SOL.

Hernani! help.

DON CARLOS.

How justly she complains!
The hand is not a bandit's who detains!

DONNA SOL.

The bandit is yourself. That royal brow,
Does it not blush, as mine for you does now?
Are these the exploits which exalt your name,—
At midnight to invade a lady's fame?
Yield to the bandit, king; if men were graced,
Not as their birth, but as their virtues placed
Their separate rank—if honour drew the line—
His were the sceptre, and the poniard thine.

DON CARLOS.

Madam—

DONNA SOL.

My father's lineage you forget;
He was a count.

DON CARLOS.

He was. And I can set
On that fair brow a ducal coronet.

DONNA SOL.

Hence, Carlos. There is naught between us two—
My aged father shed his blood for you,
And, jealous of that blood, his daughter's pride
The favourite scorns—aspire not to the bride.

DON CARLOS.

Come, bright attraction, then, my throne to share—
My queen, my empress.

DONNA SOL.

No. I see the snare.
Besides, to speak the truth, were you apart,
Another is the sovereign of my heart.

Hernani reigns there ; gladly I withdraw
With him far from the world and the world's law,
To share his destiny where'er he goes—
Privation, hunger, thirst, pursuit of foes ;
Preferring, while I cling to him alone,
His love, his toils, his miseries, to a throne.

DON CARLOS.

I envy him.

DONNA SOL.

Him, whom your law through Spain
Pursues ?

DON CARLOS.

He loves, and is beloved again.
I am alone. An angel shares his lot.
You hate me then !

DONNA SOL.

My lord, I love you not.

DON CARLOS (*seizing her with violence*).

What matters then ?

DONNA SOL.

My lord, my lord, beware.

Reflect on what I am, and what you are.
Think that contending beauty swells the throng,
Which through your palace chambers files along ;
Whate'er their rank, their title, or their name,
When the king woos, they find a mutual flame.
What has my love, my exile got from Heaven ?
To you Castile and Arragon were given ;
With Murcia, Leon, and ten kingdoms more ;
Flanders' rich fields, the Indies' golden shore—
An empire so expansive, on its breast
The sun, descending, never sinks to rest.
Having all this, you fain would tear his bride,
His one possession, from Hernani's side !

[*Throws herself on her knees before him.*]

DON CARLOS.

I'll hear no more. Forego to strive in vain,
My Indies are all yours. I'll give my Spain
To win that hand ! [*Still keeping his hold of her.*]

DONNA SOL (*snatches the dagger from his belt*).

Of all you have to grant,

This poniard is the only gift I want.
Advance one step, I kill myself and you.
Help!

DON CARLOS.

Silence—

DONNA SOL.

Help! the deed is short to do.

DON CARLOS.

You trifle with my weakness. No delay;
I have three friends can force you to obey.

Enter HERNANI suddenly.

HERNANI (*appearing behind the King*).

One you forget; and one who will pursue
Your steps much closer than those three can do.

[*The King turns round, and discovers HERNANI motionless behind him. DONNA SOL rushes into his arms.*

DONNA SOL.

Hernani, save me from him!

HERNANI.

Never fear.

DON CARLOS.

Monterey!—Are my friends too far to hear?
How could they let this chief of gipsies by?
Sanchez! my friends!

HERNANI.

All at my mercy lie.

Expect no succour from their powerless swords;
With sixty bandits I can match your lords,
Each of the sixty worth the three and you.
The quarrel now remains between us two.
With violent hand to force a lady's will
Was not a wise man's deed, King of Castile:—
It was a coward's!

DON CARLOS.

Can I stoop so low—

'A bandit's taunts to answer?

HERNANI.

Well I know

My rank, but insult joined to injury brings

The subjects to a level with their kings.
 Know ye the man before whose haughty brow
 Your own must quail, whose grasp detains ye now?
 My father earned a traitor's doom from thine—
 I hate ye. You disgraced my name and line—
 I hate ye. In my love you cross my path—
 I hate ye. Hate ye with a rival's wrath;
 And yet this evening hate had found repose;—
 I sought but her, and would have fled my foes.
 Don Carlos, 'tis in vain to rail or fret
 I hold ye in the very snare you set;
 Powerless to stir, surrounded, and at bay,
 What will you do?

DON CARLOS.

You question me?—away!

HERNANI.

None of ignoble rank shall raise the sword
 To snatch the task of vengeance from their lord;
 No blade but mine that royal blood shall spill.
 Defend yourself. [*Draws his sword.*]

DON CARLOS.

I am your sovereign. Kill,
 Strike, but no duel.

HERNANI.

If I think aright,
 That blade was crossed with mine but yesternight.

DON CARLOS.

It was. Your name I knew not, and my own
 You guessed not. But at present both are known.
 I know the robber—you the king, to-day.

HERNANI.

Perhaps—

DON CARLOS.

No duel, murder me you may.

HERNANI.

With men like us, can names be sacred made?
 Defend yourself!

DON CARLOS.

Assassin, to your trade!

[*HERNANI retreats, DON CARLOS eying him.*]

You think then, bandits, that your cutthroat hands
 Can spread unchecked their rapine o'er my hands;
 And, stained with murder, be allowed to start
 On a new course, the generous victors' part;
 That we betrayed will deign, to save our lives,
 With our good swords to cross your butcher knives?
 Your crimes pursue ye, fly them how ye will.
 Duels with you! Assassin! Strike, and kill!

[HERNANI gloomily fingers the hilt of his sword for
 a moment; then turning suddenly towards the
 King, shivers the blade against the pavement.

HERNANI.

Depart. We meet upon a future day,
 On fairer terms.

DON CARLOS.

'Tis well, I must away.
 The judge, the fiscal, and the hangman too,
 Ere night return, may have their work to do;
 'Then shall you feel my vengeance for the past.

HERNANI.

Vengeance is lame, but she arrives at last.

DON CARLOS.

Oh, that such waist a bandit's arm should clasp!

HERNANI.

Remember, thou art in the bandit's grasp.
 The future Cesar of a subject land
 Is small and weak, and trembling in this hand;
 And I can crush, if close that hand be press'd,
 Thy eagle's egg in its imperial nest.

DON CARLOS.

Do so.

HERNANI.

Away. And for your safety's sake,
 From rovers of my band, this mantle take.

[He throws his cloak over the King's shoulders.
 No vengeance shall anticipate my own.
 Away. I keep thee for myself alone.

[Exit DON CARLOS.

DONNA SOL.

Now let us fly.

HERNANI.

The task befits thee well,
To gather firmness as the tempests swell ;
Around me still, companion, wife, and friend,
To cling in fond endurance to the end :
'Tis worthy of that firm and trusting heart.
But heaven above ! for me to play that part !—
To drag her on, without regret or fear !
My time is past, the scaffold frowns too near.

DONNA SOL.

How say you ?

HERNANI.

This great monarch, whom I braved,
Will seek his life by whom his own was saved.
He flies. Already at his palace gate
He calls around the minions of his state—
His guards, his lords, his hangmen.

DONNA SOL.

Thou wilt die !
Despatch ! despatch ! Together let us fly.

HERNANI.

Together ? No ! that hour is past for flight.
Dearest, when first thy beauty met my sight,
I offered, for the love which bade me live,
Wretch that I was, what misery had to give—
My wood, my stream, my mountain. Bolder grown,
By thy compassion to an outlaw shown,
The outlaw's meal beneath the forest shade,
The outlaw's couch far in the greenwood glade,
I offered. Though to both that couch be free,
I keep the scaffold's couch reserved for me.

DONNA SOL.

And yet you promised !

HERNANI (*falling on his knees*).

Angel, in this hour,
Pursued by vengeance and oppressed by power—
Even in this hour, when death prepares to close
In shame and pain a destiny of woes—
Yes, I, who from the world proscribed and cast,
Have nursed one dark remembrance of the past,

E'en from my birth in sorrow's garment clad,
 Have cause to smile—and reason to be glad.
 For you have loved the outlaw, and have shed
 Your whispered blessings on his forfeit head.

DONNA SOL.

Let me go with you.

HERNANI.

No. I will not rend
 From its fair stem the flower as I descend.
 Go. I have smelt its perfume. Go—resume
 All that this grasp has brushed away of bloom.
 Wed the old man,—believe that ne'er we met;
 I seek my shade—be happy, and forget!

DONNA SOL.

No, I go with you. What can e'er atone
 For your desertion?

HERNANI.

Let me fly alone.

DONNA SOL (*despairingly*; HERNANI *on the threshold*).
 You fly me? Was it then for this I cast
 All at your feet, to be repulsed at last?
 Can he, for whom I braved my fate, deny
 All that remains,—the bliss with him to die?

HERNANI.

Banished—proscribed—contagious.

DONNA SOL.

Ungrateful—thankless! Rather say

HERNANI.

No, not that. I stay—
 You wish it. Let me seek these arms again;
 And till these arms release me, I remain.
 Forget our fortune and our foes to-night;
 Sit on this stone above me, bend thy sight
 On mine, and flood me with its dazzling light.
 Speak, and enchant me. Dearest, is't not sweet
 To love, and see the loved one at thy feet;
 Thus to be two, where not a third is nigh;
 To the night-air, while others sleep, to sigh?

Here, on thy breast, let my repose be found,
My love, my beauty!

[*The sound of the distant tocsin is heard.*

DONNA SOL (*rising*).

'Tis the tocsin's sound!

Hear'st thou the tocsin?

HERNANI.

'Tis our marriage-bell;

And these are notes of bridal joy, which swell
On the night breeze.

DONNA SOL.

Rise! fly! the town is bright,

Like sudden day.

HERNANI.

The marriage torches' light.

Come to these arms!

Enter a MOUNTAINEER, sword in hand.

MOUNTAINEER.

My lord! my lord! the foe

Musters his force; whole squadrons make a show
Already in the place.

HERNANI (*rising*).

What cause to fear?

Shouts without.

Death to the chief!

HERNANI.

Thy sword! the chief is here.

(*To DONNA SOL.*)

Adieu, then!

DONNA SOL.

By the open wicket fly.

Adieu! Remember, if you fall, I die,

HERNANI.

One kiss—

DONNA SOL.

Be quick, then, ere your time be past.

HERNANI (*kissing her forehead*).

Alas! it is my first.

DONNA SOL.

Perhaps your last.

[Exit HERNANL. DONNA SOL falls upon a bench.

* * * * *

SCENE,

The Castle of Silva, in Arragon. A gallery of portraits of the Silva family; armour hung up between each portrait.

DONNA SOL, dressed in white, standing by a table.

DON RUY GOMEZ DE SILVA seated in an armchair.

DON RUY.

To-day my niece that name with one supplies,
Which speaks of loftier rank and dearer ties.
But am I pardoned?

* * * * *

Oh! that this desire
Which fills the heart of frozen age with fire;
This love, which reinvigorates the mind,
Should leave the body cold and dull behind.
When, as I muse my garden glades along,
Some shepherd youth disturbs me with his song,
Whose sound from the green field can reach my bowers,
Thus I apostrophize my crumbling towers,
My ducal-dungeon keep, my loop-holed wall,
My woods, my harvests—I would give ye all;
Would give the fields my swarm of vassals tills—
Would give my flocks upon a thousand hills—
Would give the ancestors, who watch intent,
Chiding my slowness, for a son's descent
Among them, and expect him even now—
For that same peasant's hut and youthful brow.
For round that brow, unscored by age's lines,
The dark locks cluster, and beneath it shines
An eye like thine; and thou mayst well behold,
And say that man is young, and this is old.
Thus to myself I speak, and speak it true:
All, to be young, and fair, and gay as you,

All would I give. I dream ! *I* young and gay,
Who to the tomb am doomed to lead the way !

DONNA SOL.

Who knows ?

DON RUY.

Yet trust not that the youthful tribe
Can feel the constant love their words describe.
Let but a lady listen and believe,
They laugh to see her die, or live to grieve.
These birds of amorous note and gaudy wing
Can moult their passions like their plumes in spring ;
The old, whose notes are tuneless, hues less bright,
Are steadier to their nests and in their flight.
Time on our furrowed brow the graver's part
May play—he writes no wrinkles on the heart.

With all a bridegroom's love, a father's pride,
I love thee, and a hundred ways beside :—
I love thee as we love the flowers—the skies—
Earth's breathing perfumes, heaven's enchanting dies ;
And when they step, so graceful yet so free,
The aspect of that stainless brow, I see,
That heaven seems opening as I gaze on thee.

DONNA SOL.

Alas !

DON RUY.

And mark ; the reasoning world approves,
When towards an honoured grave an old man moves,
If woman deign his useless age to tend,
And smooth his progress to his journey's end.—
It is an angel's task, and thou shalt be
That angel, in a woman's form, to me.

DONNA SOL.

You may survive, and I the example give
To die. Youth has no privilege to live.

DON RUY.

Truce to such dark discussions ! I must chide
My child. This day is one of joy and pride ;
E'en to the altar now, this hour invites,
And you not ready for the sacred rites.

I count the tedious moments : quick, prepare
Your marriage toilet.

DONNA SOL.

There is time to spare.

Enter PAGE.

DON RUY.

Not so—(*to the PAGE*) What now ?

PAGE.

A stranger at your door

Is waiting, your roof's shelter to implore :—
A pilgrim.

DON RUY.

Give him shelter, food, and rest ;

Good fortune ever enters with a guest.

Brings he no news ? What say they of the band

Of lawless robbers, who infest the land

With their rebellious crew ?

PAGE.

Their end is near,

And vengeance has cut short their chief's career—
Hernani's.

DONNA SOL (*aside*).

Heavens !

* * * * *

Same Scene.—DON RUY *seated alone*.

Enter HERNANI, disguised as a Pilgrim.

HERNANI.

To all beneath this roof who rest,

Welfare and peace !

DON RUY.

The same attend my guest.

A pilgrim ?

HERNANI.

Yes.

DON RUY.

Then I presume your way

Led by Armillas ?

HERNANI.

Rumour of a fray

Deterred me.

DON RUY.

With the routed robber's band?

HERNANI.

I know not.

DON RUY.

He who holds their chief command,—
Know'st thou his fate? Hernani's?

HERNANI.

Who is he?

DON RUY.

Thou know'st him not? For others, then, shall be
The thousand crowns his forfeit head shall bring
This long-unpunished rebel to his king.
And if towards Madrid your steps you bend,
You yet may see the hangman make his end.

HERNANI.

I do not go there.

DON RUY.

He is doomed to die.

He takes his head who chooses.

HERNANI (*aside*).

Let him try.

DON RUY.

Where leads thy path?

HERNANI.

My lord, it leads me now

To Sarragossa's town.

DON RUY.

Perhaps a vow.

And to what saint? Our Lady?

HERNANI.

To the last,—

Our Lady of the Pillar.

DON RUY.

He is past

All hope of good who falters, or who faints,
Ere he redeems his pledges to the saints.
Thy vow accomplished, hast thou no desire
But just to see the pillar, and retire?

HERNANI.

Yes ; I would see the altar torches shine
 Around our Lady's image in her shrine ;
 The golden lamps which light, with fitful flame,
 The solemn vault.

DON RUY.

'Tis well, my friend. Your name ?

Ruy de Silva's mine. Oh ! you may spare
 The pains to hide what you would not declare ;
 None in De Silva's house shall claim the right
 To drag a stranger's secret into light.
 You ask a refuge ?

HERNANI.

Yes.

DON RUY.

No thanks from you :

To him who trusts my honour, mine are due.
 Rest, and be welcome ; I would do the same
 For Satan, if God sent him here by name.

*Enter DONNA SOL, in bridal array, with Pages, Valets,
 and Ladies : before her is borne, on a cushion, a
 casket of diamonds, which is then deposited on the
 table. HERNANI, thunderstruck, gazes on DONNA SOL.*

DON RUY.

Come, kneel to my Madonna ; for to-day
 She sheds good fortune round on all who pray.
 No ring, my careless bride ? No marriage crown ?

HERNANI (*in a voice of thunder*).

A crown ! Who wants a thousand crowns paid down ?
 [*He tears off his pilgrim's gown, and appears in
 his original costume.*]

I am Hernani !

DONNA SOL.

Heavens ! Alive ?

HERNANI.

'Tis true !

I am the man your bloodhounds all pursue ;
 I own no common title, but am proud
 To speak Hernani's dreaded name aloud—

The convict ! Take this forfeit head ; 'twill pay
More than your marriage feast shall cost to-day.
Bind me !—But no, 'twere useless ; for a chain
Is round me, which I cannot break.

DON RUY.

'Tis plain

My guest is mad.

HERNANI.

A price is on his head.

DONNA SOL.

Oh, heed him not.

HERNANI.

What I have said, is said.

DON RUY.

A thousand crowns ! My friend, the sum is great ;
My people may be tempted.

HERNANI.

Why debate ?

Yield me.

DON RUY.

Be silent.

DONNA SOL (*aside to HERNANI*).

For my sake restrain

This madness.

HERNANI.

I must join the bridal train.

A bride, lord duke, waits me as well as you ;
Not quite so fair as yours, but quite as true—
Death ! Do none stir ?

DONNA SOL.

Hernani ! for my sake—

HERNANI.

A thousand crowns, my masters ! Come and take.
A thousand crowns ! Come, gain it while you can :
Remember, riches make the slave a man.
You shrink !

DON RUY.

Some cause for shrinking may be shown,
For he who touched your head would risk his own.

Wert thou Hernani—wert thou, in his stead,
 The incarnate fiend—if empires for thy head
 Were offered, in the place of paltry gold—
 If for such price as this thy life were sold,
 Here thou wert safe, as in the court of heaven,
 By which the charge to guard thee has been given;
 And let me perish, if the hand of power
 Shall harm one hair of yours. Within an hour,
 My niece, we marry. To your room!—I go
 To close my castle gates against a foe. [Exit.

DONNA SOL goes towards the door, as if to follow her attendants; then, when the Duke has disappeared, returns anxiously to HERNANI.

HERNANI.

Accept my compliments on your array;
 Your toilet charms me more than I can say—
 No foil, no tinsel here—all fair and brave.

[Examining the casket.

He dare not play you false, so near his grave.
 Naught missing? Necklace—earrings—every thing—
 The ducal coronet—the golden ring!
 How like his love—so faithful, deep, and true—
 'This casket seems!

DONNA SOL (taking a dagger from the casket).

You have not searched it through.

Behold this dagger, which I chose alone
 Of all the gifts—among the rest, a throne—
 Which the king offered, which for you I spurned—
 You, my accuser!

HERNANI (*at her feet*).

Reason has returned.

Oh, let me wipe these bitter tears away—
 Tears, which my folly caused, my blood shall pay.

DONNA SOL.

Hernani! still I love you; and forgive,
 Because I love.

HERNANI.

That pardon bids me live.

But e'en thy love and thy forgiveness bring
No balm to sooth my self-reproaches' sting.
Oh, I could watch thee, were it but to trace
The spot thy footstep pressed, and kiss the place.

DONNA SOL.

To think the memory of my love so frail,
That force could bend, or misery make me quail,
And narrow this free bosom to a cell,
Where any image but thine own might dwell !

HERNANI.

Oh, I blasphemed and raved ! Alas ! were I
The object of a madman's blasphemy,
I should discard the wretch, whose passion takes
Its life and spirit from the wounds it makes.

DONNA SOL.

Oh, you have ceased to love ?

HERNANI.

My soul, my heart,
Are thine. Then blame me not that I depart.
'Tis for thy sake alone I wish to fly.

DONNA SOL.

I shall not blame thee. I shall only die.

HERNANI.

Die ! and for me !

DONNA SOL.

For whom, if not for you ?

HERNANI.

Again you weep—and who shall make *me* rue,
Who cause those tears ? You will forgive again,
And who my depth of anguish can explain,
To see the tear-drop dim that eye, whose blaze
Is all on which I love, and live to gaze ?
Oh ! had I worlds, these worlds were all for you.

DONNA SOL.

You are my master, generous, brave, and true.

HERNANI.

Could we but love too much, how could I bless
My fate to perish of that love's excess !

DONNA SOL.

Thine, and for ever ! Heaven, attest my vow

HERNANI.

Oh! that thy poniard could but strike me now!

DONNA SOL.

Heaven will be angry with these words of ill.

HERNANI.

Let it unite, if it refuse to kill.

Come to these arms, I yield me to its will.

Enter DON RUY GOMEZ.

DON RUY.

And this is hospitality's reward?

And this the guest whose life I went to guard?

Foolish old man! for this array thy power—

Up drawbridge, bolt the portal, man the tower!—

Select a harness fit for age to wear,

Such as the strength of sixty years can bear—

Prepare to fight, to die, to starve, to burn—

Brave all the worst—to meet with this return!

Yes, I have walked for sixty years of time,

No dull observer in a world of crime—

Have seen men live accursed, and die unblest—

Sin unrestrained, and perish unconfessed—

Sforza and Borgia both, the world's disgrace,

Have seen, and Luther, who now holds their place—

But never saw the criminal who dared

Insult the roof whose very rights he shared;

This is not of my time. We live to view

Crimes which no former ages ever knew;

Moors and Castilians, sprung this man from you?

[Appealing to the portraits.]

Lords of De Silva, fathers of my race,

Listen, and hear me; if my rage embrace

Rash counsels,—if with vice's name I brand

The virtue of the open heart and hand,

Forgive me.

HERNANI.

If to man was ever given

To meet with noble brow the glance of heaven;

If ever heart betrayed the noble line

From which it sprung, that brow and heart are thine.

I stand a culprit here, with naught to say
Or do but face my judgment as I may.
I shared the shelter of your roof—I tried
To spoil your treasure—to seduce your bride.
I have my blood to offer.—When 'tis shed,
Wipe but your blade, and think not of the dead.

DONNA SOL.

De Silva, hold. The crime was mine alone.

HERNANL

Wait, lady, wait. This hour I claim my own.
I would employ the moments which remain—
My last—not to extenuate, but to explain:
Believe a dying culprit. Be secure,
De Silva; I am guilty, she is pure.

DONNA SOL.

Mine was the crime; I love him.—Yes, 'twas I—
I love him.

DON RUY (*furious*).

Woman, you shall see him die.

[*Trumpets without.*]

Enter PAGE.

DON RUY.

What noise was that?

PAGE.

A herald, sir, demands
Admission for King Carlos and his bands
Within your gates.

DON RUY.

Obey the king's commands.

[*Exit PAGE.*]

DONNA SOL.

He's lost!

[*DON RUY goes to one of the portraits (his own),
and, pressing a secret spring, a concealed door
is discovered in the wall*]

DON RUY.

You enter here.

HERNANI.

I hold my life

At your disposal, and, to close our strife,
Strike when you will.

[He enters the secret door. DON RUY presses the spring, and the portrait resumes its natural position.]

DONNA SOL.

Oh, spare that life to-day !

PAGE entering.

My lord the King.

Enter DON CARLOS, followed by numerous armed men ;

DONNA SOL lowers her veil.

DON CARLOS.

How comes it, cousin, pray,
That when your sovereign seeks De Silva's hall,
Your bolts are drawn, your archers on the wall,
To hear my herald waste his breath beneath ?
I thought your sword was rusting in its sheath,
And find it ready from that sheath to start—
'Tis somewhat late to play this youthful part.—
Wear I the turban ?—Answer, do I spring
From Moorish race ?—am I a Christian king,
Carlos ? or do I bear a Pagan name,
Mahom Boabdil, that I bear this shame ?

DON RUY.

My lord—

DON CARLOS (*to his attendants*).

Seize all the castle gates, and take
The keys. Is this the fashion you would wake
The ghost of dead rebellions, and renew
Old treasons ? Know, the King is waking too
Ready rebellion's progress to arrest,
And crush its leaders in their mountain nest.

DON RUY.

None of De Silva's line was ever found
A traitor.

DON CARLOS.

Speak me out, or to the ground

Each stone of your eleven towers I raze.
There lives one spark of old rebellion's blaze—
The bandit chief survives! Who hides him now?
Who guards the rebel? Rebel duke, 'tis thou!

DON RUY.

It is.

DON CARLOS.

'Tis well. His head or thine must fall—
Or his or thine shall grace thy castle wall.
Hear'st thou, my cousin?

DON RUY.

You shall be content.

My lord, if that be all.

DON CARLOS.

Oh, you repent;

Produce the rebel.

DON RUY (*leads the King to the most ancient of the portraits*).

In that reverend face

Behold the father of De Silva's race,
Silvius; in Rome he filled the consul's place
Three times. (Your patience for such honoured names.)
This second was grand master of St. James
And Calatrava; his strong limbs sustained
Armour which ours would sink beneath. He gained
Thirty pitched fields, and took, as legends tell,
Three hundred standards from the infidel;
And from the Moorish king Motril, in war
Won Antiquera, Suez, and Nijar,
And then died poor.

This reverend brow,

This was my sire's—the greatest, though the last:
The Moors his friend had taken, and made fast—
Alvar Giron. What did my father then?
He went to seek him with six hundred men;
He cut in stone an image of Alvar,
Cunningly carved, and dragged it to the war;
He vowed a vow, to yield no inch of ground
Until that image of itself turned round;

He reached Alvar—he saved him—and his line
Was old De Silva's, and his name was mine—
Ruy Gomez.—

DON CARLOS.

Drag me from his lurking-place

The traitor!

* DON RUY (*leads the King to the portrait behind
which HERNANI is concealed*).

Sir, your highness does me grace;

This, the last portrait, bears my form and name,
And you would write this motto on its frame:—
“This last, sprung from the noblest and the best,
Betrayed his plighted faith, and sold his guest.”

DON CARLOS (*retiring, somewhat disconcerted*).

I shall abate your house. Strongholds like these
I hate.

DON RUY.

Your highness can afford to please
Your fancy.

DON CARLOS.

I shall raze its towers, and sow
Their place with flax-seed.

DON RUY.

Better that should grow,
And mark and mock the desolated spot,
Than falsehood's stain should be De Silva's lot;
Is it not true sirs?—I appeal to you.

[*Appealing to the portraits.*]

DON CARLOS.

His head is mine; you promised—

DON RUY.

One of two—

Take this.

DON CARLOS.

You wear my long indulgence out!
Produce the wretch you shelter.

DON RUY.

Can you doubt

My word?

DON CARLOS (*to his men*).

Explore each tower, cave, and cell.

DON RUY.

My lord, my dungeon keeps a secret well,
Like me ; and it may pass your power to bring
To light our mysteries.

DON CARLOS.

I am your king.

DON RUY.

Until these towers are levelled to the plain,
Just as you threatened, and their master slain,
Your highness can learn nothing.

DON CARLOS.

All is vain ;

Menace and prayer alike. Give me his head.
The bandit, or your castle.

DON RUY.

I have said.

DON CARLOS.

Two heads instead of one then. 'Tis my will.
Arrest the duke there !

DONNA SOL (*tearing off her veil, rushes between the King,
the Duke, and Guards*).

Carlos of Castile !

You are a wicked king !

DON CARLOS.

This lady here !

DONNA SOL.

You bear no Spanish heart.

DON CARLOS.

You are severe

Upon your sovereign. 'Tis to you I owe
This rage—from you the faults you censure flow ;
Where'er your power extends, you rule our fate—
You make a demon of the man you hate ;
Hadst thou been kind, enchantress, I were great,
The tiger now, whose angry roar can thrill
Your ear, had been the lion of Castile.
Yet, I obey.—(*To the Duke*). My cousin, I respect
Your scruples, and permit you to protect
Your castle's inmate. Set yourself at rest—
Betray your sovereign, and defend your guest.

I take one hostage only from your hall—
Your niece.

DON RUY.

One only?

DONNA SOL.

Me!

DON RUY.

And this is all!

The generous victor! Boon without compare!
The heart to torture and the head to spare!
Great Grace!

DON CARLOS.

The traitor, or the lady? Choose—
One I must have.

DON RUY.

But one you can. Then use

Your pleasure.

[*The King approaches DONNA SOL; she takes
refuge with DON RUY.*

DONNA SOL.

Save me!—Wretched, it must be—
Me or my uncle. Let it fall on me.
I follow, sir.

DON CARLOS.

I triumph in the thought;
This fair one to her senses shall be brought.

[*DONNA SOL goes to the casket, and taking from
it the dagger, hides it in her girdle.*

What hides she there?

DONNA SOL.

A jewel which I prize.

DON CARLOS.

Show it.

DONNA SOL.

Another time, sir.

[*DONNA SOL gives her hand to DON CARLOS,
and prepares to follow him; DON RUY, having
stood some moments overwhelmed in grief,
turns round suddenly.*

DON RUY.

Earth and skies !

Since honour nor compassion can prevail—
Ye trophied chambers, walls hung round with mail—
Ye banners, seamed with scars of conflict, fall,
And crush the oppressor in my father's hall !
Leave me my child, my last, my only good !

DON CARLOS.

My prisoner, then !

DON RUY.

Respect De Silva's blood.

[Going towards the concealed door, he turns again to the portraits.]

Hide me from these ! They stop me on my path !

[Again he advances towards the secret door, then turning to the King.]

You will ?

DON CARLOS.

Yes.

[The Duke raises his trembling hand to the secret spring, then falls at the King's feet.]

DON RUY.

Let my life assuage your wrath.

DON CARLOS.

Your niece shall.

DON RUY *(rising)*.

Take her ; let my honour live

Stainless.

DON CARLOS.

Farewell.

DON RUY.

God keep you, and forgive !

[Exit the King, with DONNA SOL and attendants. As soon as they are gone, DON RUY seizes two swords, measures them, and lays them on the table ; then he goes to the portrait, presses the secret spring, and the door opens.]

Come forth !

Enter HERNANI.

Don Carlos is beyond my walls,
Vengeance remains, and reparation calls.
Choose—and choose quickly! Can it be with fright
Your young hand shakes?

HERNANI.

Old man, we may not fight.

DON RUY.

Why! are you frightened? Is your rank and grade
Too humble? For a wrong received, my blade
Shall cross a slave's.

HERNANI.

Old man—

DON RUY.

You cannot fly,
Young man; prepare to kill me, or to die.

HERNANI.

Granted—to die! My life I owe to you;
Spite of myself, you saved it—take your due.

DON RUY.

Blame but yourself alone, then. Time runs fast—
Pronounce your prayer.

HERNANI.

To you I make my last.

DON RUY.

Make it to Heaven.

HERNANI.

To thee, to thee, old man.

Kill by what mode you please—strike how you can—
But do not, while the blow impends, deny
The last sole boon—to see her, ere I die.

DON RUY.

To see her!

HERNANI.

Let me hear her voice's tone;
At least, that voice but once, and once alone.
You shall be there; I will not speak, nor move.
Then strike me as I listen.

DON RUY.

Saints above!

Is that retreat so deep, that he has heard
Nothing of what was spoken?

HERNANI.

Not a word.

DON RUY.

To save your life, I was compelled to bring
A hostage, in my niece, to—

HERNANI.

Whom?

DON RUY.

The king.

HERNANI.

The King. He loves her! and obtains by force
All she refused his prayer.

DON RUY.

My horse! my horse!

Gather my vassals for pursuit!

HERNANI.

Attend.

Slow vengeance is the surest to its end.
I am your property; but you may still
Employ the man you have a right to kill—
To grant my share of vengeance were but just.
For this one boon I bow me to the dust,
And kiss your feet. When he whom both pursue
Has died for us, then I will die for you.

DON RUY.

Will you submit, as now, your blood to shed?

HERNANI.

I swear it.

DON RUY.

By what oath?

HERNANI.

My father's head.

DON RUY.

Will you remember this some future day?

HERNANI.

Listen. Accept this horn. Betide what may,
Whene'er it please you to exert your power,
Whate'er the time or place, to name my hour—

Come, and be welcome. Sound this horn, and then
'Tis done.

DON RUY.

Your hand. (*Addressing the portraits.*) Bear
witness, ancient men! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE,

The Tomb of CHARLEMAGNE, in Aix-la-Chapelle.

Night.

DON CARLOS and DON RICARDO, a *Courtier* (*wrapped
in cloaks*).

DON RICARDO (*with a lantern in his hand*).

This is the place.

DON CARLOS.

'Tis here the traitor band
Meet, to be crushed at once beneath this hand.
My friend, the elector, lends the appropriate stage
For treason's foul designs and faction's rage;
Murder breathes freely in a catacomb,
And loves to whet her dagger on a tomb.
'These gallants, still so ready with their knives,
Are playing somewhat high—they stake their lives.
Faith! they do well, in these sepulchral caves
To hatch their crimes;—the journey to their graves
Will be the shorter. Do these caves extend
Far under ground?

DON RICARDO.

My lord, before they end
They reach the fort.

DON CARLOS.

Too distant to explore.
Read me the list of traitors' names once more.

* * * Am I sure?

The college meets, but is their choice secure?
And when it fixes the imperial crown,
What signal speaks the election to the town?

DON RICARDO.

The cannon's thunder: one for Saxony—
Two for the Frenchman—for your highness, three.

DON CARLOS.

This is the hour the traitors meet. Away!—
Give me the key.—Three cannon shots, you say?

[DON RICARDO bows assent, and retires.

DON CARLOS, alone.

Great Charlemagne's shade, the mighty and the just!
I sue for pardon to thy hallowed dust,
That human aims and passion's voice presume
To pierce the sacred silence of thy tomb.
Yet must I force it. (*He places the key in the door of
the tomb.*) Heavens! if he should rise,
And glare upon me with his lifeless eyes!—
If this sepulchral cell disclose the dead
Erect, and walking with a measured tread!
If I should enter there—to reappear
The strong limb palsied, dark locks blanched with fear!
I brave it! (*Noise of footsteps.*) Whence that noise?
Who dare invade—

Who but myself, the rest of such a shade?

[*The noise approaches.*

I had forgot—my murderers seek their prey.

[*He enters the tomb, and closes the door after him.*

*Enter several of the Conspirators, among which are the
Duke of Gotha and Don Ruy de Silva, all muffled in
long cloaks and slouched hats; each takes the hand
of his neighbour.*

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Who's there?

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

A friend.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

The saints direct our way.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

'Tis well; we all are gathered. But the night
Is round and o'er us—darkness waits the light.

VOL. I.—L

[The Conspirators seat themselves in a semicircle on the tombs; they then light their torches.]

DUKE OF GOTH.

Carlos of Spain, my friends, seeks to assume
The imperial purple.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Carlos seeks his tomb.

DUKE OF GOTH (*throws down his torch and stamps upon it*).

Quenched be his light, as now I quench this fire;
And as this torch expires, let him expire!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

How many daggers shall the sentence need?

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

One arm, one blade, one blow, to do the deed.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

Who strikes it?

ALL.

I!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

All will! one only may.

Let us decide the choice by lot, and pray.

[The Conspirators write their names on their tablets, and having rolled up the paper, throw it into an urn.]

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

May the elect have faith in God on high;
Strike like a Gentile—like a Hebrew die!
Let him be fit to strike with fire and steel,
Sing at the stake, and laugh upon the wheel—
Resigned alike to perish and to kill.

[Draws a name from the urn.]

ALL.

What name?

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Hernani!

HERNANI (*appearing from the crowd*).

Fortune aids my will!

Aim of my soul, and object of my vow,
Pursued and won, Revenge! I hold thee now.

DON RUY (*aside to HERNANI*).

Grant me this office.

HERNANI.

No, upon my life,
Fortune and I have been too long at strife;
'Tis the first time I learn her smiles to know.

DON RUY.

My lands, my fortune, for this single blow!

HERNANI.

I will not.

DUKE OF GOTH.

Aged man! your arm might fail.

DON RUY.

Away! the soul and spirit may prevail
Where the flesh falters; judge not by the sheath,
Rusted and worn, the blade which lies beneath.

(*To HERNANI*.)

Remember thou art mine, whose wish you scorn;
Grant me but this, and I return this horn.

HERNANI.

My life, old man! and what have I to prize
In life! My father's blood for vengeance cries.
No; I prefer revenge! Wouldst thou restore
Her?

DON RUY.

Never: take this horn.

HERNANI.

No more, no more;
My chase is done. Lord Duke, leave me my prey.

DON RUY.

Cursed be the man who bears the prize away!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

Brother! this very evening it were well—

HERNANI.

Fear not. I know to do the work of hell
Without a tutor, sir.

He reached Alvar—he saved him—and his line
Was old De Silva's, and his name was mine—
Ruy Gomez.—

DON CARLOS.

Drag me from his lurking-place

The traitor !

DON RUY (*leads the King to the portrait behind
which HERNANI is concealed*).

Sir, your highness does me grace ;

This, the last portrait, bears my form and name,
And you would write this motto on its frame :—
“ This last, sprung from the noblest and the best,
Betrayed his plighted faith, and sold his guest.”

DON CARLOS (*retiring, somewhat disconcerted*).
I shall abate your house. Strongholds like these
I hate.

DON RUY.

Your highness can afford to please
Your fancy.

DON CARLOS.

I shall raze its towers, and sow
Their place with flax-seed.

DON RUY.

Better that should grow,
And mark and mock the desolated spot,
Than falsehood's stain should be De Silva's lot ;
Is it not true sirs ?—I appeal to you.

[*Appealing to the portraits.*]

DON CARLOS.

His head is mine ; you promised—

DON RUY.

One of two—

Take this.

DON CARLOS.

You wear my long indulgence out !
Produce the wretch you shelter.

DON RUY.

Can you doubt

My word ?

DON CARLOS (*to his men*).
Explore each tower, cave, and cell.

DON RUY.

My lord, my dungeon keeps a secret well,
Like me ; and it may pass your power to bring
To light our mysteries.

DON CARLOS.

I am your king.

DON RUY.

Until these towers are levelled to the plain,
Just as you threatened, and their master slain,
Your highness can learn nothing.

DON CARLOS.

All is vain ;

Menace and prayer alike. Give me his head.
The bandit, or your castle.

DON RUY.

I have said.

DON CARLOS.

Two heads instead of one then. 'Tis my will.
Arrest the duke there !

DONNA SOL (*tearing off her veil, rushes between the King,
the Duke, and Guards*).

Carlos of Castile !

You are a wicked king !

DON CARLOS.

This lady here !

DONNA SOL.

You bear no Spanish heart.

DON CARLOS.

You are severe

Upon your sovereign. 'Tis to you I owe
This rage—from you the faults you censure flow ;
Where'er your power extends, you rule our fate—
You make a demon of the man you hate ;
Hadst thou been kind, enchantress, I were great,
The tiger now, whose angry roar can thrill
Your ear, had been the lion of Castile.
Yet, I obey.—(*To the Duke*). My cousin, I respect
Your scruples, and permit you to protect
Your castle's inmate. Set yourself at rest—
Betray your sovereign, and defend your guest.

I take one hostage only from your hall—
Your niece.

DON RUY.

One only?

DONNA SOL.

Me!

DON RUY.

And this is all!

The generous victor! Boon without compare!
The heart to torture and the head to spare!
Great Grace!

DON CARLOS.

The traitor, or the lady? Choose—
One I must have.

DON RUY.

But one you can. Then use
Your pleasure.

[*The King approaches DONNA SOL; she takes
refuge with DON RUY.*

DONNA SOL.

Save me!—Wretched, it must be—
Me or my uncle. Let it fall on me.
I follow, sir.

DON CARLOS.

I triumph in the thought:
This fair one to her senses shall be brought.

[*DONNA SOL goes to the casket, and taking from
it the dagger, hides it in her girdle.*

What hides she there!

DONNA SOL.

A jewel which I prize.

DON CARLOS.

Show it.

DONNA SOL.

Another time, sir.

[*DONNA SOL gives her hand to DON CARLOS,
and prepares to follow him; DON RUY, having
stood some moments overwhelmed in grief,
turns round suddenly.*

DON RUY.

Earth and skies !

Since honour nor compassion can prevail—
Ye trophied chambers, walls hung round with mail—
Ye banners, seamed with scars of conflict, fall,
And crush the oppressor in my father's hall !
Leave me my child, my last, my only good !

DON CARLOS.

My prisoner, then !

DON RUY.

Respect De Silva's blood.

[Going towards the concealed door, he turns again to the portraits.]

Hide me from these ! They stop me on my path !

[Again he advances towards the secret door, then turning to the King.]

You will !

DON CARLOS.

Yes.

[The Duke raises his trembling hand to the secret spring, then falls at the King's feet.]

DON RUY.

Let my life assuage your wrath.

DON CARLOS.

Your niece shall.

DON RUY *(rising)*.

Take her ; let my honour live

Stainless.

DON CARLOS.

Farewell.

DON RUY.

God keep you, and forgive !

[Exit the King, with DONNA SOL and attendants. As soon as they are gone, DON RUY seizes two swords, measures them, and lays them on the table ; then he goes to the portrait, presses the secret spring, and the door opens.]

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Shall cross a slave's.

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Old man—

DON RUY.

You cannot fly,
Young man; prepare to kill me, or to die.

HERNANI.

Granted—to die! My life I owe to you;
Spite of myself, you saved it—take your due.

DON RUY.

Blame but yourself alone, then. Time runs fast—
Pronounce your prayer.

HERNANI.

To you I make my last.

DON RUY.

Make it to Heaven.

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To thee, to thee, old man.

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But do not, while the blow impends, deny
The last sole boon—to see her, ere I die.

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At least, that voice but once, and once alone.
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Nothing of what was spoken?

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Not a word.

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To save your life, I was compelled to bring
A hostage, in my niece, to—

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Whom?

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HERNANI.

The King. He loves her! and obtains by force
All she refused his prayer.

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Gather my vassals for pursuit!

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I am your property; but you may still
Employ the man you have a right to kill—
To grant my share of vengeance were but just.
For this one boon I bow me to the dust,
And kiss your feet. When he whom both pursue
Has died for us, then I will die for you.

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Will you submit, as now, your blood to shed?

HERNANI.

I swear it.

DON RUY.

By what oath?

HERNANI.

My father's head.

DON RUY.

Will you remember this some future day?

HERNANI.

Listen. Accept this horn. Betide what may,
Whene'er it please you to exert your power,
Whate'er the time or place, to name my hour—

Pastrana, in his coffin and his shroud,
Would match but poorly with this gaudy crowd.

DON RICARDO.

Marked ye, but now, amid the fair array
Of dress, and dancing plumes, and colours gay,
A spectre, which by yonder balustrade
Looked darkly down, and marred the masquerade ?

DON SANCHEZ.

I saw it well.

DON RICARDO.

What was it ?

DON SANCHEZ.

I could trace

Prancasio's shape.

DON RICARDO.

Not so. It hides its face

Still with its mask.

DON MATHIAS.

'Twas Soma's frowning brow !

DON SANCHEZ.

Not so ; for Soma spoke to me but now.

DON RICARDO :

It comes again ! What can the spectre be ?

Enter a black Domino, who slowly crosses the stage.

All turn, and look on him.

If e'er the grave can set its inmates free,
Such is their step.

DON MATHIAS (*addressing the Mask*).

Fair masker !—(*the Mask turns*

round.) By my soul,

His eyes are kindled like a living coal !

DON SANCHEZ.

If 'tis the Devil, or the Devil's sire,

He meets his match. (*The Mask stops, and looks fixedly on him.*) His eyes are balls of fire !

[*The Mask slowly descends the staircase, followed by the eyes of the whole company.*

DON RICARDO.

In truth, the vision spreads a gloom around.

DON MATHIAS.

Faith, it might fright us in a churchyard's ground!

DON SANCHEZ.

It comes, obedient to some wizard's spell,
To see our revels, and return to hell.

DON MATHIAS.

Well, we shall know to-morrow.

DON SANCHEZ.

Look, I pray;

It moves!

DON RICARDO.

The gloomy phantom stalks away.

DON MATHIAS.

Where glides it?

DON SANCHEZ.

Through the portal, down the stair.

'Tis strange!

DON MATHIAS.

No more.—Here come the bridal pair.

Enter HERNANI and DONNA SOL, hand in hand, followed by Masks, Lords and Ladies, Pages, &c.

DON SANCHEZ.

'Tis midnight; and 'tis fit that we pursue
The example of the ghost, and vanish too.

[Exeunt all but HERNANI and DONNA SOL.]

DONNA SOL.

Dearest! at length they leave us. By yon moon,
It should be late.

HERNANI.

And can it come too soon—

The hour that frees us from the listening crowd,
To breathe our sighs, so long suppressed, aloud?

DONNA SOL.

The noise disturbed me. Must we not confess,
Rejoicing stuns the scene of happiness?

HERNANI.

'Tis true; for happiness is kin to rest,
And writes its lessons slowly on the breast.

When busy pleasure strews its path with flowers
 Or breaks the silence of its quiet bowers,
 It flies ; and if it smile, its smile appears
 Far less allied to laughter than to tears.

DONNA SOL.

Yet in your eyes its smile is sunny day.

[He motions to her to follow him.]

Remain awhile.

HERNANI.

I am your slave—delay—
 Do as thou wilt—all that thou dost is well ;
 My soul is all obedience to thy spell.
 It burns ; yet bid the fierce volcano still
 Its fires—they sink, subservient to thy will.
 Its gulfs shall close, its lavas check their tide,
 And spring's young verdure clothe the crater's side.

DONNA SOL.

Your kindness brings my woman's heart to shame,
 Hernani of my heart !

HERNANI.

Forbear that name !

Oh, be that sound forbidden and forgot,
 Which wakes the memory of an exile's lot !
 I knew him once. Hernani !—'twas a dream !—
 His eye glared fiercely, like a poniard's gleam !—
 Son of the mountain and the night ! a vow
 Of blood and vengeance written on his brow—
 Proscribed—I cannot recognise him now !
 I mix in festivals—I join the ring
 Of glittering nobles, nearest to the king—
 I walk with nobles—am a noble's son—
 Thy love, thy husband ! John of Arragon !
 Am blest !

DONNA SOL.

And I !

HERNANI.

Why should I bear in mind
 The tattered garments that I leave behind ?
 In mourning to my palace I repair,
 An angel of the Lord awaits me there.

I bid the fallen column's shaft aspire—
 On my ancestral hearth I light its fire—
 I ope its casements to the wind, which sports
 Mid the rank herbage of its grass-grown courts—
 I weed that herbage from the creviced stone,
 And seat my house's honour on its throne :
 My king restores me to each ancient right—
 My seat in council, and my crest in fight.
 Come, then, in blushing beauty, come, my bride,
 Lay the sad memory of the past aside—
 That past is all unsaid, unseen, undone ;
 I start afresh, a glorious course to run.
 I know not if 'tis madness fires my breast—
 I love you—I possess you—and am blest !

DONNA SOL.

How well, upon the glossy velvet's shade,
 This collar looks !

HERNANI.

The King was so arrayed.

DONNA SOL.

I marked *him* not. 'Tis not the velvet's fold,
 'Tis you that give its lustre to the gold.
 Oh, you are fit to be the order's chief !
 One moment yet—I weep, but not with grief.
 One little moment, to indulge the sight
 With the rich beauty of the summer night.
 The harp is silent, and the torch is dim—
 Night and ourselves together. To the brim
 The cup of our felicity is filled.
 Each sound is mute—each harsh sensation still'd.
 Dost not thou think, that e'en, while nature sleeps,
 Some power its amorous vigils o'er us keeps ?
 No cloud in heaven : while all around repose,
 Come taste with me the fragrance of the rose,
 Which loads the night-air with its musky breath,
 While all around is still as nature's death.
 E'en as you spoke—and gentle words were those
 Spoken by you—the silver moon uprose.
 How that mysterious union of a ray
 With your impassioned accents made its way

Straight to my heart! I could have wished to die
In that pale moonlight, and while thou wert by.

• HERNANI.

Thy words are music, and thy strain of love
Is borrowed from the choir of heaven above.

DONNA SOL.

Night is too silent—darkness too profound.
Oh! for a star to shine, a voice to sound—
To raise some sudden strain of music now,
Suited to night!

HERNANI.

Capricious girl! your vow
Was poured for silence, and to be released
From the thronged tumult of the marriage feast.

DONNA SOL.

Yes; but a bird, to carol in the field—
A nightingale, in moss and shade concealed—
A distant flute—for music's stream can roll
To sooth the heart, and harmonize the soul—
Oh, 'twould be bliss to listen!

[*Sound of a horn in the distance.*

I am heard!

HERNANI (*shuddering*).

Oh, misery!

DONNA SOL.

Sure some angel caught my word.
'Twas thy good angel!

HERNANI (*bitterly*).

Surely—Hark, again!

DONNA SOL.

That was your horn! How well I know the strain!

HERNANI.

My horn?

DONNA SOL.

Do you, then, share this serenade?

HERNANI.

Share it?—I do

DONNA SOL.

Thou music of the glade—

How I prefer thee to the festal sound
 To which the dancer's giddy train goes round.
 Then 'tis your horn, whose voice, like yours, I know.
[Horn sounds again.]

HERNANI.

The tiger roaring for his prey below.

DONNA SOL.

Juan, that sound with rapture bids me glow.

HERNANI.

Call me Hernani; I must reassume
 That fatal name of vengeance and of gloom.

DONNA SOL.

How say you?

HERNANI.

That old man—

DONNA SOL.

Why glares your eye?

HERNANI.

How in the darkness he stands laughing by!
 Dost thou not mark?

DONNA SOL.

What is't you bid me see?

What man?

HERNANI.

The stern old man.

DONNA SOL.

Upon my knee,

To learn this secret of your soul, I pray.

HERNANI.

My oath—

DONNA SOL.

Your oath?

HERNANI.

What can I do or say?

Let me spare *her*. 'Twas nothing, my beloved.

DONNA SOL.

And yet you spoke.

HERNANI.

My mind was strangely moved.

I am not well—'twill pass—Be not afraid.

Suffer the spirit you have vexed in vain
 So long, to be itself once more, and reign,
 Thy love the empire, and thy mistress Spain.
 Don John, thy heart is worthy of the line
 From which it springs. [To DONNA SOL.

And worthy too of thine.

[Placing the Order of the Golden Fleece round
 HERNANI's neck.

Receive this gift, to rank and virtue due :
 Knight of the Fleece, be faithful, brave, and true :
 But round your neck a nobler chain you bear,
 Which kings bestow not—which I cannot wear—
 The two arms of a loved and loving bride.
 Away. Be thine the bliss to kings denied.
 For your associates here, I know them not ;
 Their crimes are pardoned, and their names forgot.
 I give this lesson from an infant throne.

CONSPIRATORS (*kneeling to him*).

Long may he live !

DON RUY.

I stand condemned alone.

DON CARLOS.

And I !

DON RUY (*aside*).

But I, like him, have not forgiven.

HERNANI.

Who thus can change our hearts ?

ALL.

Protect him, Heaven.

Honour to Charles the Fifth !

DON CARLOS (*turning to the tomb*).

To Charles the Great !

Leave me alone with him. (*All retire* DON CARLOS

Guide of my fate ! (*alone*).

My great example ! Wilt thou shed thy grace
 On him who seeks but to pursue thy trace ?
 I stood alone against an empire, toss'd
 On faction's wildest waves, and almost lost ;
 The Dane to punish, and the Pope to pay—
 The Turk and Luther barred alike my way—

MASK.

I seek thee in thy bower
Of bliss, to tell thee 'tis arrived—the hour.
I find thee unabsolved.

HERNANL.

What wouldst thou do?

MASK.

Dagger or poison, choose between the two—
I have them here. Together we will stray
On our long path.

HERNANL.

So be it.

MASK.

Let us pray.

HERNANL.

What matters?

MASK.

Which?

HERNANL.

The poison.

MASK (*presenting a vial*).

Reach and take.

Drink, and leave some for me.

HERNANL.

For pity's sake,

To-morrow! If thou play'st a human part—
If heaven with human blood has warmed thy heart—
If, in its mercy, it delay e'en now
To write the words "For ever" on thy brow—
If e'er on thee the bliss supreme was shed,
To love in youth, and her you loved to wed—
If ever woman trembled in thy arms—
If ever passion's voice, or beauty's charms
To sooth thine ear, or glad thine eye, were known—
Wait till to-morrow—then demand thy own!

MASK.

Wait till to-morrow! Yes, you reason well—
This hour, this instant, sounds thy funeral knell.
How shall I speed, who may not wait till morn?
When I am vanished, who shall sound this horn?

Pastrana, in his coffin and his shroud,
Would match but poorly with this gaudy crowd.

DON RICARDO.

Marked ye, but now, amid the fair array
Of dress, and dancing plumes, and colours gay,
A spectre, which by yonder balustrade
Looked darkly down, and marred the masquerade?

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I saw it well.

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He meets his match. (*The Mask stops, and looks fixedly on him.*) His eyes are balls of fire!

[*The Mask slowly descends the staircase, followed by the eyes of the whole company.*

DON RICARDO.

In truth, the vision spreads a gloom around.

DON MATHIAS.

Faith, it might fright us in a churchyard's ground!

DON SANCHEZ.

It comes, obedient to some wizard's spell,
'To see our revels, and return to hell.

DON MATHIAS.

Well, we shall know to-morrow.

DON SANCHEZ.

Look, I pray;

It moves!

DON RICARDO.

The gloomy phantom stalks away.

DON MATHIAS.

Where glides it?

DON SANCHEZ.

Through the portal, down the stair.

'Tis strange!

DON MATHIAS.

No more.—Here come the bridal pair.

Enter HERNANI and DONNA SOL, hand in hand, followed by Masks, Lords and Ladies, Pages, &c.

DON SANCHEZ.

'Tis midnight; and 'tis fit that we pursue
The example of the ghost, and vanish too.

[Exeunt all but HERNANI and DONNA SOL.]

DONNA SOL.

Dearest! at length they leave us. By yon moon,
It should be late.

HERNANI.

And can it come too soon—

The hour that frees us from the listening crowd,
To breathe our sighs, so long suppressed, aloud?

DONNA SOL.

The noise disturbed me. Must we not confess,
Rejoicing stuns the scene of happiness?

HERNANI.

'Tis true; for happiness is kin to rest,
And writes its lessons slowly on the breast.

DON RUY.

Lady—

DONNA SOL.

Forgive us both. You once were kind—
 You cannot take him, and leave me behind;
 I perish when on him you deal the blow—
 I love him so!

DON RUY.

Too much.

HERNANI.

Your eyes o'erflow.

DONNA SOL.

You shall not perish. Grant him but a day,
 And I will love you too.

DON RUY.

Perhaps you may;

And after him!

[HERNANI approaches the vial to his lips, she
 throws herself on his arm.

DONNA SOL.

Oh! hear me—yet delay.

DON RUY.

The grave is yawning, and his hour will strike—
 I cannot wait.

DONNA SOL.

Have I deserved to die?

HERNANI.

Oh! she distracts my senses with that cry!

DONNA SOL.

Thou know'st I have a thousand things to say—
 When I have said them, then—

DON RUY.

I cannot stay.

[She seizes the vial.

DONNA SOL.

I have it!

DON RUY.

Since two women here I find,
 I must go hence, to seek for men in mind
 As well as outward form. You speak us fair,

When by the blood from which you spring you swear.
I go to tell your sire how well you keep
Your compacts.

HERNANI (*to DONNA SOL*).
Stay. Alas! Wouldst thou not weep

Tears of more burning anguish e'en than now,
To see dishonour written on my brow;
To see me through the world a traitor driven,
By its just scorn? By all our hopes of heaven,
Restore that dark elixir!

DONNA SOL (*drinks the poison*).
Now I can!

DON RUY.

'Twas, then, for her?

HERNANI.
Behold'st thou, aged man?

DONNA SOL.
Blame not my act—I have reserved thy share—

HERNANI.
Alas!

DONNA SOL.
Thou wouldst not have endured to spare
My portion. Thou, weak man, canst not divine
How love the daughters of De Silva's line.
I drink the first, and am at rest. Proceed,
Drink if thou wilt.

HERNANI.
What demon urged the deed?

DONNA SOL.
It was thy will.

HERNANI.
Such dreadful death to brave!

DONNA SOL.
How so?

HERNANI.
That filter leads thee to thy grave.

DONNA SOL.
Was not this head to sleep upon thy breast
To-night? What matters where it sinks to rest?

HERNANI.

My father, thy revenge is just—that I
Forget. [*He approaches the vial again to his lips.*]

DONNA SOL. (*throws herself upon him*).

Forbear! forbear! 'Tis hard to die—

This poison lives, and round the heart it hangs,

Like a fell serpent with a thousand fangs.

Oh, drink it not. Alas! I could not tell

That earthly pain could match the fires of hell—

He drinks!

HERNANI (*drinks, and throws away the vial*).

'Tis done.

DONNA SOL.

Come, then, to meet thy fate—

Come to these arms. Is not the torture great?

HERNANI.

Not so.

DONNA SOL.

Bekah, our marriage couch is spread.

Am I not pale, for one so lately wed?

Be calm. I suffer less. Our wings expand

T'wards the blest regions of a happier land—

Together let us seek that world so fair—

One kiss—and one alone.

DON RUY.

Despair! Despair!

HERNANI.

Blest be the heaven, which from my birth pursued

My life with misery, and in blood imbrued—

For it permits me, ere I part, to press

My lips to thine, and die on thy caress.

DON RUY.

They still are happy!

HERNANI.

Donna Sol, 'tis night.

Dost thou still suffer?

DONNA SOL.

No.

HERNANI.

Seest thou the light?

Not yet—

DONNA *get.*

I see it.

HERNANI.

[*Dies.*

DON RUY.

Dead!

DONNA SOL.

Not so, we rest.

He sleeps. He's mine—we love, and we are blest.

This is our marriage couch. What happier spot

Can the world show? Lord Duke, disturb us not.

[*Her voice gradually sinks.*

Turn thee towards me—nearer yet—'tis well.

Thus, let us rest.

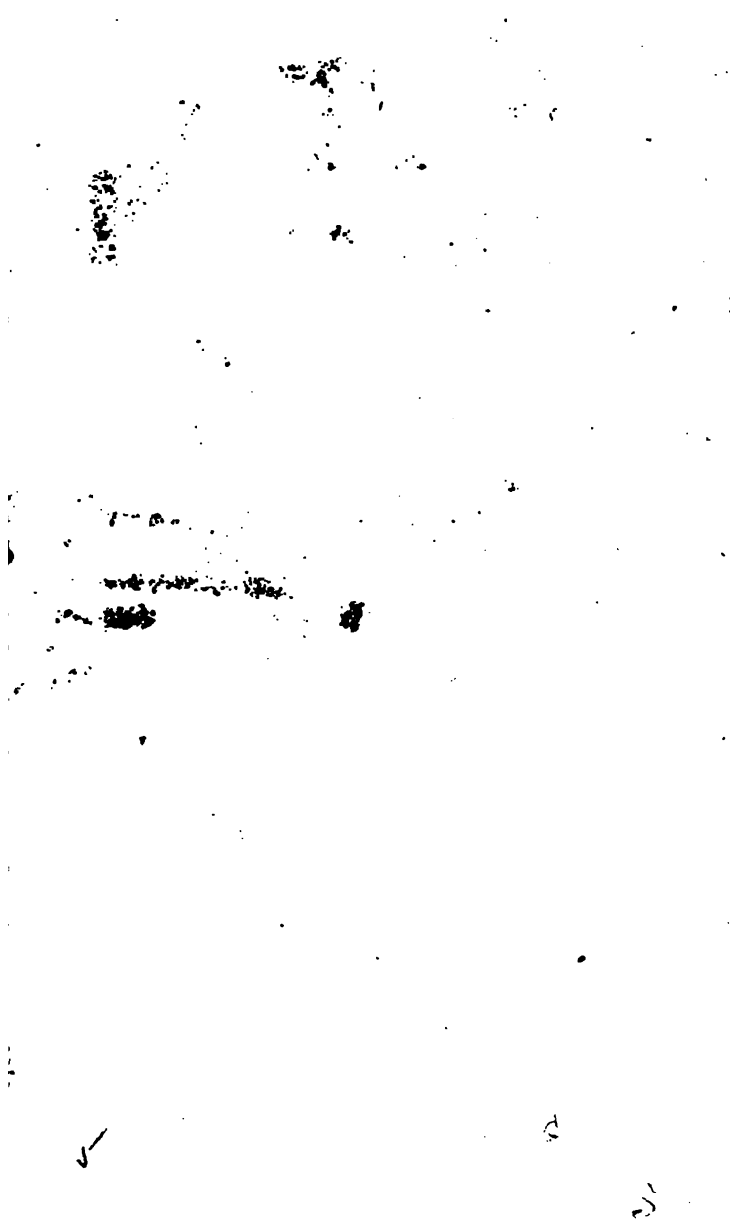
[*Dies.*

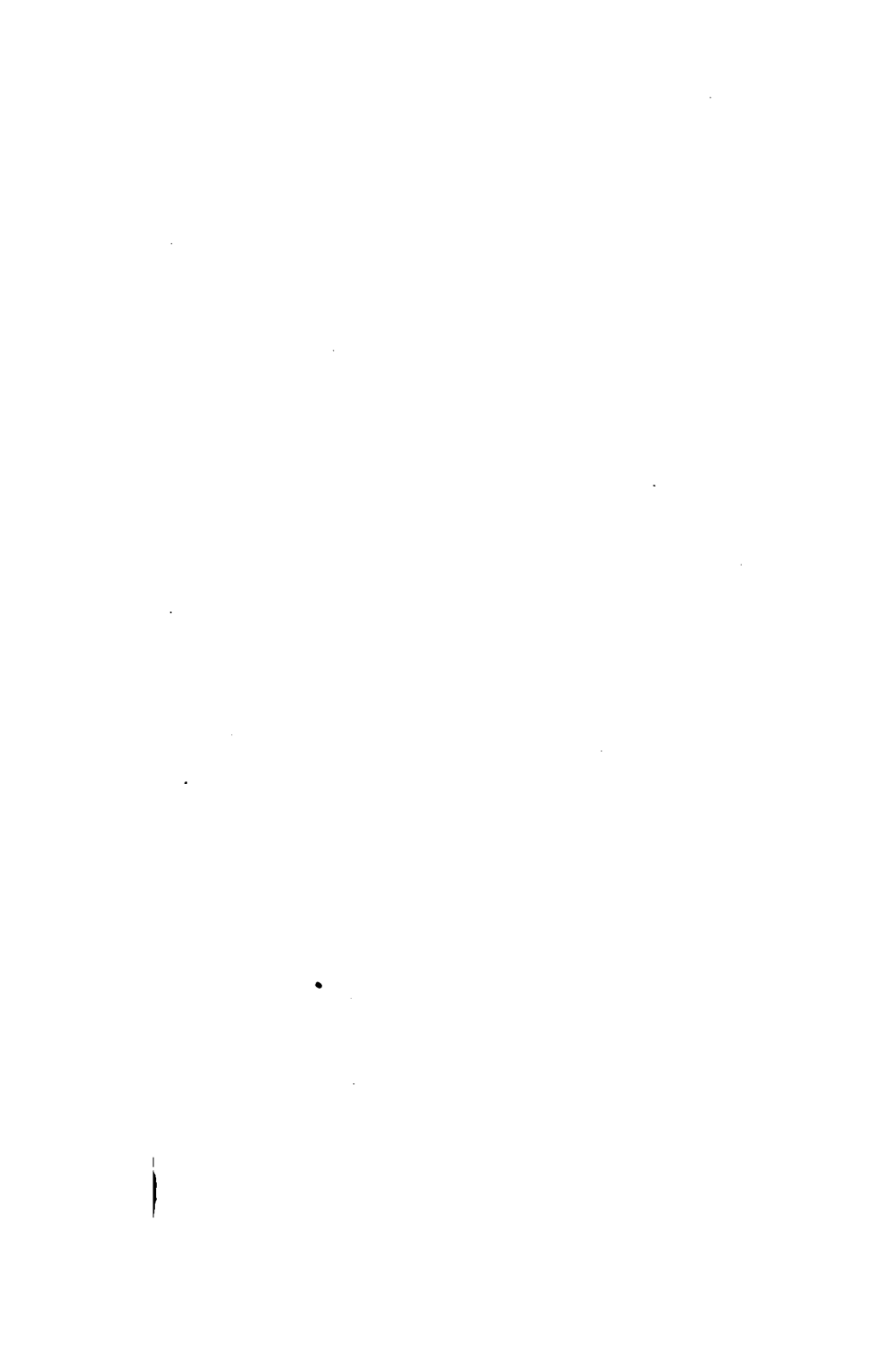
DON RUY.

Both dead!—Receive me, heft!

[*Kills himself.*

END OF VOL. I.









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